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HONORING THE TEACHER – SAFEGUARDING THE FUTURE: NEW INITIATIVES IN EDUCATION AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PEDAGOGICAL EXCELLENCE

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Abstract. The article summarizes the initiatives identified during the meeting of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev with teachers and mentors, highlights their scientific and pedagogical essence and role in the development of society. Pedagogical skills, speech culture, oratory, and the hermeneutic ability of the teacher as criteria for the quality of education are analyzed. Future tasks are presented in the form of a systematic proposal.

Keywords: teacher, pedagogical skills, speech culture, oratory, pedagogical hermeneutics, folk books, quality of education, quality index, dual education, artificial intelligence.

INTRODUCTION

The destiny of every nation is determined, first and foremost, at the threshold of the school—in the dialogue between teacher and student. In his work *Turkiy Guliston yoxud Axloq* (The Turkic Rose Garden, or Morality), Abdulla Avloni described upbringing as a matter of life or death, salvation or ruin, happiness or disaster for us. Although more than a century has passed, these words of wisdom have lost none of their relevance; on the contrary, they have become even more pressing today.

At a time when artificial intelligence is fundamentally transforming the ways we acquire knowledge and work, the need arises to rethink the purpose of education. Machines are performing the tasks of searching for, filtering, and presenting information at great speed. Yet, reaching a child's heart and instilling in them a love for the Motherland, as well as a sense of honesty, responsibility, and industriousness, is something only a living human being—a teacher—can achieve. Drawing upon this very truth during a meeting with teachers and mentors, our President Shavkat Mirziyoyev described the teacher as a "river of kindness," a "fountain of goodness," and a "sun of enlightenment." The purpose of this article is to summarize the initiatives outlined during the meeting, elucidate their scientific and pedagogical significance, and propose future tasks based on our long-term research—specifically in the areas of pedagogical skill, culture of speech, the art of oratory, pedagogical hermeneutics, and Uzbek folk literature.

1. THE GENERALIZED ESSENCE OF THE INITIATIVES OUTLINED AT THE MEETING

An analysis of the ideas expressed during the meeting reveals a central theme: the primary focus of education is not buildings, equipment, or statistical figures, but rather the content and quality of instruction and the social status of the teacher. Over the past decade, kindergartens providing 1.8 million places and schools providing 1.5 million places have been built, and more than 10,000 educational institutions have been modernized. While acknowledging these achievements, the President emphasized a crucial conclusion: "an issue even more important than buildings is the content and quality of instruction." This represents a clear declaration of the shift from quantity to quality in education policy. The initiatives can be grouped into five areas. First,

strengthening the status of educators: establishing the Abdulla Avloni State Award; including preschool teachers and vocational college instructors in the "Teacher of the Year" competition; providing a 50 percent salary supplement to teachers holding international or national certificates; and sending one thousand educators abroad for internships. Second, results-based management: introducing a "quality index" to evaluate school performance; and setting a 30 percent salary supplement for high-performing schools that assist others in their development. Third, shifting from mandatory requirements to freedom of choice: issuing professional development vouchers instead of mandatory one-month training courses; and allowing educators to select their own training programs ranging from 18 to 72 hours. Fourth, continuity across educational stages and career orientation: mastering a profession and a foreign language starting from the school level; and expanding dual education from vocational colleges to higher education institutions. Fifth, equality and diversity: supporting inclusive education, private schools, and vocational colleges; and attracting branches of the world's top 300 universities. The table below summarizes the initiatives across education sectors.

Joint	**Key Initiative**	**Scientific and pedagogical essence**
Preschool education	Game-based education program in over 38,000 kindergartens; 3-year internship for educators	Early discovery of the child's abilities, raising the professional status of the educator
General secondary education	Quality index, professional development vouchers, in-depth subject teaching, grouping classes of over 25 students	Result-oriented management, the freedom of the pedagogue to choose his own trajectory
Inclusive and private education	Inclusive schools reached 3,591; privileges for private schools	Equal opportunity and freedom of choice, quality through competition
Vocational education	International programs, cooperation with 25,000 enterprises, "Founders of New Uzbekistan" competition	Vocational orientation from school, practical competencies
Higher education	Dual education, supervisory boards, international programs, branches of the 300 strongest universities	Education and labor market integration, academic quality and responsibility

In this system, each initiative complements the others. For instance, a child whose talents are discovered through play in kindergarten gains the opportunity for in-depth academic study at school, subsequently progressing to dual education—based on enterprise requirements—within vocational or higher education. In this process, the mentor at each stage serves as an equal link in the chain.

2. THE ROLE OF THE INITIATIVES IN SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT

In modern pedagogy and economic theory, education is viewed as the primary factor in shaping human capital. A nation's wealth is measured not merely by natural resources, but by people who can think critically, possess professional skills, and adapt to a changing world. In this context, the role of the initiatives outlined by the President in societal development manifests at three levels.

The first level is socio-spiritual stability. In his speech, the President emphasized that we have brought our children from the cotton fields back to the classroom and returned teachers to the educational process. This is not merely a simple statement; it is an expression of the essence of education as it relates to social justice and human dignity. A family that sends its child to school with confidence, a teacher who takes pride in their work, and a student who believes in their future—these are the three pillars of a stable society.

The second level is economic development. Achievements such as 15-year-old students climbing 32 places to rank 48th in the PISA science assessment, the winning of 228 medals at prestigious Olympiads in a single year, and the fact that 100,000 students have obtained certificates in foreign languages and academic subjects while still in school, all signal positive shifts at the very roots of the education system. In-depth instruction in mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology; partnerships between technical colleges and 25,000 enterprises; and the implementation of dual education and the "enterprise–university–targeted personnel" model are bridging the gap between education and the labor market. This serves as the foundation for youth employment, technological advancement, and a competitive economy.

The third level is the internal development of the pedagogical system. The fact that the number of teachers holding international and national certificates has risen from 29,000 to 143,000 over five years, the teacher shortage in schools has been reduced threefold, and 40,000 teachers are earning salaries exceeding $1,000 demonstrates that the prestige of the profession is being restored. It would be unfair to demand high quality if educators do not derive both material and intrinsic satisfaction from their profession. Therefore, a balance between incentives and responsibility must be the guiding principle of the reform.

The principles of equality and freedom of choice are also vital conditions for societal progress. The nearly fivefold increase—to 3,591—in the number of schools with inclusive facilities over the past two years paves the way for children with special needs to study and grow alongside their peers. In such an environment, children without special needs also learn the values of empathy, tolerance, and mutual support. Meanwhile, the incentives provided to private schools and technical colleges do not replace the state education system; rather, they enhance quality through healthy competition and enable state schools to enrich their own practices. The emphasis placed on preschool education rests on a solid scientific foundation. Modern psychology and pedagogy confirm that a child's early years are crucial for the formation of their personality. Viewing the

kindergarten as a place where a child's talents are discovered, implementing play-based educational programs in over 38,000 kindergartens, and training 180,000 educators signifies the laying of a foundation for future academic motivation and creative thinking. Furthermore, supporting working mothers through subsidies for family-based kindergartens links educational policy with family stability and women's economic participation.

Additionally, the "quality index" and voucher system are fostering a new culture in education management: support instead of oversight, choice instead of directives, and results instead of reporting. This culture is rooted in the concept of the self-developing school and the self-developing educator.

3. PEDAGOGICAL SKILL AND SPEECH CULTURE: A BENCHMARK OF EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

Ultimately, all the initiatives mentioned above come to fruition in the classroom—through the teacher's words, gaze, and demeanor. While new textbooks, modern facilities, and the provision of loans and incentives are important, the primary factor influencing a child is the teacher's personality and words. Therefore, the true benchmark of educational quality is pedagogical skill.

Pedagogical skill is a high level of professional competence manifested through a harmonious blend of knowledge, professional skills, personal qualities, and creativity. It comprises four components: deep knowledge of the subject matter and teaching methodology; the ability to understand a student's mindset and select appropriate teaching methods; self-regulation and creative adaptability; and, most importantly, a culture of speech. A teacher's speech serves not merely as a means to convey the subject matter; it also acts as a model of literary language, a way of thinking, and moral conduct for the student. A culture of speech encompasses not only correct pronunciation, spelling, a rich vocabulary, logical coherence, and stylistic appropriateness but also a culture of respect toward the listener. The tone in which a question is asked of a student, the reaction to their mistakes, and the words of praise or admonition used all serve to either build or diminish their self-confidence. Therefore, fostering the skills of "critical thinking" and "independent thought"—emphasized by the President—depends primarily on the teacher's own culture of questioning and listening. An educator who cannot listen to a student's ideas or ask creative questions will not raise a generation of critical thinkers.

The art of oratory is an integral part of a teacher's work. Ancient Greek and Eastern thinkers viewed oratory not merely as eloquent speech, but as a synthesis of ideas, ethics, and the power of influence. A lesson is a stage for a mini-speech: it has a beginning (engaging interest), a development (explanation and reflection), a climax (the moment of discovery), and a conclusion. By skillfully employing tone, pauses, gestures, examples, and analogies, a teacher can convey even complex concepts to students in a clear and memorable way. Therefore, the study of speech culture and the art of oratory needs to be strengthened in teacher training institutions and professional development programs as a distinct discipline grounded in practical training.

Another vital aspect of pedagogical mastery is pedagogical tact and moral standing. Students look more at how a teacher lives than at what they say. An educator whose words and actions align, who keeps their promises, and who guides students onto the right path without insulting them for their mistakes leaves an indelible mark on their students' hearts. In Eastern pedagogical thought, the teacher has always been an embodiment of morality and propriety; the works of Yusuf Khass Hajib, Kaykavus, and Alisher Navoi extol the virtue of being responsible with one's words alongside the possession of knowledge. In today’s era of artificial intelligence, these human qualities constitute the teacher's invincible advantage over machines.

4. THE EDUCATOR'S HERMENEUTIC ABILITY: THE ART OF UNDERSTANDING AND EXPLAINING

Hermeneutics originated in ancient times as the art of interpreting texts and was elevated to the level of a theory of understanding in the works of Schleiermacher, Dilthey, and Gadamer. Pedagogical hermeneutics, in turn, examines the issues of understanding and interpretation within the educational process. Its essence lies in the idea that teaching is not merely the transmission of information from one person to another, but the co-creation of meaning. Students interpret each piece of new knowledge through the lens of their own experiences, language, and worldview; the educator must grasp the nature of this interpretive process and guide it in the right direction.

An educator's hermeneutic ability manifests in three areas. The first is the understanding and interpretation of texts: uncovering the deeper meaning of a textbook passage, a literary work, a historical source, or a problem statement, and adapting it to the student's age. The second is understanding the student: discerning the underlying concepts or internal barriers behind their answers, errors, silences, and questions. The third aspect is achieving understanding through dialogue: the meeting of the teacher’s and the student’s perspectives—or, to use Gadamer’s term, their "horizons"—and their arrival at a shared meaning.

This ability is crucial for the formation of national values, a responsible attitude and critical thinking in children in new textbooks, especially in the humanities. The President noted that since 2018, new generation textbooks have been created in schools, and 324 textbooks have been revised this year. However, even the best textbook becomes living knowledge only in the hands of an interpretive teacher. A teacher with a low level of hermeneutics memorizes the content of the textbook without revealing it, while a teacher with a high level connects it with the student's life and encourages him to draw independent conclusions. There is also a new situation that did not exist before the era of artificial intelligence: a student can instantly receive a ready-made answer to any question. Then the teacher's task is not to give an answer, but to teach them to evaluate the correctness of the answer, critically analyze the source and deeply understand its meaning and content. This is also, first of all, a hermeneutic skill. Therefore, pedagogical hermeneutics is of primary importance in education in the digital era.

5. FUTURE TASKS

To support the initiatives outlined by the President and ensure their practical effectiveness, the following tasks lie ahead for the science and practice of pedagogy:

1. Establishing pedagogical mastery as a component of the quality index. When evaluating the performance of schools and educators, it is essential to consider not only exam results but also lesson observations, pedagogical speech, interaction with students, and the quality of the learning environment; clear and transparent criteria must be developed for this purpose.

2. Making the culture of speech and the art of oratory a mandatory practical module in teacher training. Training sessions focused on voice, pronunciation, storytelling, questioning techniques, and active listening skills should be organized within pedagogical universities, technical colleges, and professional development systems.

3. Incorporating hermeneutic competence into qualification requirements. It is advisable to include modules on understanding and interpreting texts and student perspectives, as well as managing conversations and discussions, within the training programs selected via professional development vouchers.

4. Transforming artificial intelligence into an assistant for the educator. Artificial intelligence should alleviate the burden of routine tasks—such as preparing reports, tests, and

lesson materials—thereby allowing teachers to dedicate more time to interacting with students; simultaneously, this fosters a culture of digital ethics and critical source evaluation among students.

5. Elevating the status of mentors and educators equally. Including kindergarten educators and vocational college instructors in the "Teacher of the Year" competition, alongside creating opportunities for them to pursue further education while working, will enhance the prestige of the teaching profession. In this regard, it is essential to strengthen the mentorship system, where experienced educators train young specialists in the profession.

6. Establishing platforms for the exchange of experience. The expertise of recipients of the Abdulla Avloni Award and the practices of leading schools should be disseminated through manuals, video lessons, and masterclasses to help reduce disparities between regions.

7. Linking scientific research to practice. Pedagogical research must regularly analyze outcomes related to "quality indices," vouchers, and dual and inclusive education; it should synthesize successful practices and identify problematic areas in a timely manner. Given the President's criticism regarding the quality of higher education textbooks and training, scholars must contribute their efforts to address this issue.

8. Strengthening cooperation between the family and the school. A teacher's standing is established first and foremost within the family. Programs that foster pedagogical awareness among parents, as well as a culture of respectful communication between teachers and parents, must be implemented.

9. Making respect for teachers a deeply held societal conviction. It is the collective responsibility of society to portray educators respectfully in social media and mass media and to prevent any dismissive attitudes toward the teaching profession.

The modernization of the teacher training system warrants special attention. Starting next academic year, reducing the study period for preschool educators at pedagogical higher education institutions from four to three years—and extending this same opportunity to assistant educators with at least five years of experience—will broaden the pathways into the profession. However, while the duration of study is being shortened, the quality and substance of the curricula must not be compromised. To achieve this, key prerequisites for educators who are studying while working include the availability of distance and blended learning programs, guidance from experienced mentors, and an increased emphasis on practical training.

Granting the highest professional category directly to teachers who have trained Olympiad winners, along with the introduction of subject Olympiads for primary school students, helps identify talented children at an early stage. In this process, it is essential to adhere to the principle of focusing on every child rather than just the winners; competitions should engage students without imposing undue psychological pressure. From this perspective, a teacher must be able to accept both a student's achievements and setbacks with respect—viewing them as opportunities for growth—and must possess a high level of pedagogical tact.

In higher education, the issue of the pedagogical competence of academic and teaching staff requires special attention. Although many scholars are experts in their respective fields, they often lack the ability to convey knowledge to students in a clear and engaging manner. In dual education systems, it is essential that both the mentors assigned by enterprises and university instructors undergo specialized training in pedagogical skills, speech culture, and communication techniques. Only then will the collaboration between education and industry transcend mere paperwork and translate into genuine teaching quality.

A phased approach is advisable for implementing the aforementioned tasks. In the initial stage (within one year), training modules and methodological guides covering assessment criteria, speech culture, and hermeneutics will be developed and piloted in selected schools. In the second stage (spanning two to three years), the tested modules will be integrated into the voucher system, and anthologies of folk literature along with digital resources will be distributed to schools. In the third stage (leading up to 2030, coinciding with the updating of textbooks for upper grades), the established experience will be implemented across all levels of education and refined based on the results of scientific monitoring.

Two principles must be adhered to at all stages. First, any innovation should not impose additional paperwork or burdens on the teacher; on the contrary, it should free up their time to work with students. Second, innovations must be developed with the direct participation of teachers, taking their proposals and opinions into account. The very fact that the President listened to the teachers' proposals and initiatives during the meeting demonstrates that the reform is being implemented in partnership with them.

CONCLUSION

The set of initiatives outlined during the President's meeting with teachers and mentors marks a new phase in education policy—one grounded in substance and quality, the status of the teacher, tangible results, and continuity. Awards, salary supplements, vouchers, quality indices, dual education, and international cooperation—all these serve as mechanisms to foster trust in the teacher (the central figure in education) and to enhance their sense of responsibility. Ultimately, however, the effectiveness of these tools depends on the teacher's skill, the impact of their words, their ability to understand the student, and their capacity to foster the student's development into a spiritually rich individual.

Therefore, recognizing pedagogical skill, a culture of speech, the art of oratory, and hermeneutic ability as benchmarks of educational quality—while also passing on our people's centuries-old experience in upbringing, including the heritage of traditional folk literature, to the new generation—ensures the successful integration of these reforms. As the President has emphasized, honoring a teacher means honoring not merely a professional, but the future of the entire nation. Backing these words with concrete action is a scholarly, professional, and human duty for each of us.

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