

## HISTORY EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN AND JAPAN: LESSON QUALITY AND PATRIOTIC EDUCATION

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**Abstract.** *This article offers a comparative-historical analysis of the legal, pedagogical and moral mechanisms shaping lesson quality in general secondary schools in Uzbekistan and Japan. The study draws on official policy documents, OECD PISA 2022 data, research on Japanese education, and content from an Uzbek history textbook. The comparison identifies national standards, curriculum, textbooks, teacher professional development and civic-moral education as interrelated components of instructional quality. PISA results are used only as system-level context, since they do not directly measure the quality of a particular history lesson. The article proposes a source-based model for teaching national heroes—Jalal al-Din Mangburni, Temur Malik, Najm al-Din Kubra, Mahmud Tarabi and Amir Temur—through historical evidence, period context, moral choice and critical reflection. It concludes that conscious patriotism is strengthened not by mythologising historical figures, but by developing evidence-based historical thinking and civic responsibility.*

**Keywords:** *Uzbekistan, Japan, school education, lesson quality, history teaching, national hero, patriotism, historical memory, lesson study, moral education.*

### 1. Introduction

In the 21st century, the general secondary school is emerging not merely as an institution that transmits knowledge but as one that shapes students' historical memory, national identity, civic position, and social responsibility. The acceleration of digital information flow and the spread of historical events in simplified or ideologically coloured interpretations on social networks place new demands on the history lesson. Today's student must not merely limit themselves to knowing lists of dates and figures; they must be able to distinguish fact from interpretation, verify the origin of a source, explain the causes and consequences of an event, and draw a civic conclusion from historical experience. In this sense, lesson quality and patriotic education are two pedagogical directions that complement one another but are not identical concepts.

Islam Karimov, linking historical memory with spirituality and will, emphasised that knowledge of history is essential for a society's self-awareness [1, pp. 8–10]. Shavkat Mirziyoyev's idea that “New Uzbekistan begins from the school threshold, from the education system” likewise defines the school as the initial link in state and societal development [2]. This political-normative approach requires that patriotism in history

education be interpreted not as a set of slogans but as a competency linked to knowledge, moral choice and responsibility.

The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Education” sets out tasks for raising learners in a spirit of humanism, patriotism, diligence, and respect for national and universal values [3]. In the 2017 state education standards, competency is defined as the ability to apply knowledge, skills and abilities in daily activity, with socially active citizenship and national and general cultural competencies specifically identified [5]. The 2019 Concept for Development until 2030 set as strategic goals the improvement of teaching methodology, the strengthening of professional development, and entry into the top 30 countries in the PISA rankings [4].

Although Japan's experience developed under historically and institutionally different conditions, it provides an important comparative field for studying the interrelation of lesson quality, moral education and national culture. Japan's Basic Act on Education interprets respect for tradition and culture, and love for the country and local region, together with respect for other countries and a contribution to world peace [6]. In MEXT's curriculum standards, moral education — *dōtoku* — is linked to human dignity, community spirit, tradition, culture and international responsibility [7]. The purpose of this article is to identify institutional similarities in the experience of the two countries and to develop criteria for the scientifically grounded use of the national hero image in history lessons.

The scholarly literature on this topic points to two important directions. The first examines *dōtoku*, patriotism and historical-memory policy in Japanese education. Bamkin draws attention to the gap between policy documents and classroom practice [12]; Fukuoka and Takita-Ishii show that young people do not perceive patriotic education uniformly, and that its content depends on personal experience and political context [13]. Nozaki and Spremberg demonstrate that choices in historical memory and the interpretation of war turn textbook content into a contested field [14; 15]. The second direction concerns the pedagogy of historical thinking: Wineburg, and Barton and Levstik, propose studying history not as a ready-made conclusion but through sources, argumentation and civic discussion [18; 19]. Combining these two directions helps preserve the educational potential of the hero image while ensuring historical objectivity and academic integrity.

## 2. Sources and Research Methods

The research relied on comparative-historical analysis, interpretation of normative documents, content analysis, and comparative-pedagogy methods. Sources were divided into four groups: the first — Uzbekistan's education-related laws and concepts; the second — Japan's legislation and MEXT curriculum standards; the third — international data from the OECD and the World Bank; the fourth — scholarly literature

on historical thinking, lesson study, patriotism and moral education. The images of heroes in Uzbekistan's history textbook were examined as a separate content unit [16].

Lesson quality was analysed using the following criteria: clarity of the learning objective; compliance with the state standard and curriculum; reliability of the textbook and supplementary sources; the teacher's professional collaboration; the student's active participation; alignment of assessment with the objective; the moral-civic component; and the opportunity to work with historical sources. In analysing the national hero image, the following criteria were applied: reliance on historical evidence, presentation of the individual's actions within the context of the period, not concealing contradictory factors, discussion of moral choice, and progression toward a modern civic conclusion.

The article is not based on field research, observation, or experimental results among students. The proposed methodological model is therefore presented not as an empirically “proven technology” but as a conceptual recommendation derived from a synthesis of documents and scholarly literature. Likewise, PISA results are not a direct rating of an individual teacher or an individual history lesson; they are a contextual indicator reflecting an education system's functional-literacy results in mathematics, reading and science [8; 9].

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. General Mechanisms Ensuring Lesson Quality

The comparison shows that in both countries education quality is governed through state-defined general goals, curricula, textbooks, and teachers' professional activity. In Uzbekistan this system is regulated by law, state education standards, and strategic concepts [3–5]. In Japan, the Basic Act on Education and the Courses of Study serve as the national normative framework [6; 7]. Thus, although institutional forms differ, a common feature is the state's role in setting minimum quality requirements and educational goals.

The second similarity is the unity of knowledge and upbringing. In Uzbekistan's standards, socially active citizenship and national and general cultural competencies are presented as cross-curricular tasks [5]. In Japan's documents, respect for tradition and culture is balanced with love for the country, respect for other peoples, and international cooperation [6; 7]. This comparison shows that a scientifically sound interpretation of patriotism should rest not on belittling other peoples or presenting a one-sided view of history, but on responsibility toward one's own society together with reliance on universal moral norms.

The third common factor is teacher quality. Uzbekistan's concept identifies the training, retraining and professional development of teachers as a priority task [4]. In Japan, lesson study organises professional learning through teachers jointly developing lesson plans, observing lessons, and analysing students' thinking [10; 11]. Fernandez and Yoshida show that in this process attention is focused not on a “model performance”

but on determining how students understand the content [11]. This principle could also be adapted for Uzbekistan's history teachers: for example, on the topic “Temur Malik's Defence of Khujand,” sources, maps, questions and assessment criteria could be jointly developed by a subject methodological association.

The fourth common aspect is that the textbook remains the central instrument regulating instructional content. At the same time, the textbook cannot be treated as the sole and final expression of historical truth. A quality history lesson enriches the textbook text with maps, document excerpts, images of material culture, scholarly commentary, and contrasting viewpoints. Assessment, too, should be directed not merely at repeating names and dates but at selecting evidence, explaining cause and effect, evaluating source reliability, and writing a reasoned conclusion. This approach corresponds to Uzbekistan's standards for working with information and for socially active citizenship competencies [5], and is consonant with Japan's policy on the integrity of knowledge, morality and community responsibility [6; 7]. In other words, while textbook quality matters, the ultimate pedagogical outcome depends on how the teacher turns it into a system of questions and sources.

**Table 1. Comparative criteria of lesson quality in schools of Uzbekistan and Japan**

| Criterion                    | Uzbekistan                                               | Japan                                             | Comparative conclusion                                 |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Legal basis                  | Law, State Education Standard, 2030 Concept              | Basic Act, Courses of Study                       | Quality is regulated by state policy                   |
| Learning objective           | Competency, citizenship and national values              | Knowledge, morality, community spirit and culture | Unity of knowledge and upbringing                      |
| Teacher development          | Professional development and methodological associations | Lesson study and in-school collaboration          | Professional collaboration is a central quality factor |
| Historical-educational focus | Historical memory and patriotism                         | Tradition, culture, love for country and region   | Patriotism is balanced with universal values           |

### 3.2. PISA 2022 Results and the Limits of Their Interpretation

In PISA 2022, Japan scored 536 in mathematics, 516 in reading and 547 in science, outperforming the OECD average in all three domains [8]. Uzbekistan, participating for the first time, scored 364, 336 and 355 respectively [9]. This gap points to the need to develop students' skills in solving complex problems, understanding texts, and transferring knowledge to new situations. The World Bank's 2026 data likewise notes

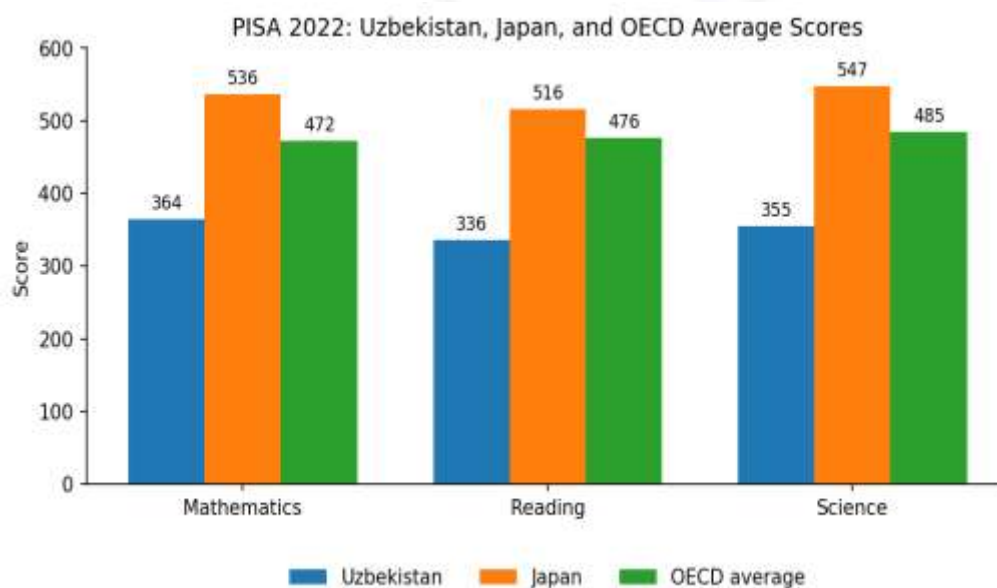
that while primary-education coverage in Uzbekistan exceeds 99 percent, fundamental results in reading and mathematics, and teaching practice, still need improvement [17].

However, it would be scientifically incorrect to draw from PISA scores the conclusion that “every lesson in Japan is of high quality, while lessons in Uzbekistan are not.” PISA is a system-level sample assessment, and its results are shaped by curriculum, socio-economic conditions, school resources, student wellbeing, and many other factors. Moreover, the test does not measure the subject of history separately. This article therefore uses PISA only to compare functional literacy and the overall performance of education systems; the quality of a history lesson should be assessed through criteria specific to the discipline, such as working with sources, argumentation, historical context, and reflection [18; 19].

**Table 2. Average PISA 2022 scores**

| Domain      | Uzbekistan | Japan | OECD average |
|-------------|------------|-------|--------------|
| Mathematics | 364        | 536   | 472          |
| Reading     | 336        | 516   | 476          |
| Science     | 355        | 547   | 485          |

*Source: OECD PISA 2022 country notes [8; 9].*



*Figure 1. Comparative view of PISA 2022 results*

### **3.3. Teaching the National Hero Image in History Lessons on a Scholarly Basis**

In the introduction to Uzbekistan's Grade 7 history textbook, Jalal al-Din Mangburni, Temur Malik, Sheikh Najm al-Din Kubra, Mahmud Tarabi and Amir Temur are mentioned as important figures in the defence of the homeland and in the history of statehood [16, p. 4]. In the textbook's chapters devoted to the Mongol conquest, Temur Malik's defence of Khujand, Najm al-Din Kubra's valour in the defence of Urganch, and Jalal al-Din Mangburni's struggle at Parvan and along the Indus are recounted [16,

pp. 68–73]. This material has the potential to arouse students' emotional interest, but presenting a historical figure solely as an object of praise may limit scholarly thinking.

Research on historical thinking requires that students understand history not as a set of ready-made judgements but as an interpretation built on evidence. Wineburg argues that historical thinking differs from everyday intuitive thinking, and that it is necessary to examine a source's author, time of creation and purpose [18]. Barton and Levstik link history education to democratic citizenship, evidence-based discussion, and an understanding of differing viewpoints [19]. On this basis, a five-stage model is proposed for teaching the national hero image: posing the historical situation as a problem; comparing primary and secondary sources; explaining the individual's decision in light of the possibilities of the period; evaluating the consequences of the decision; and reflecting on modern civic responsibility.

For example, on the topic of Jalal al-Din Mangburni, the question “Why did his army weaken after the victory at Parvan?” directs analysis toward internal discord and factors of political governance without denying his heroism. The question “Were there alternative paths to the decision at the Indus?” keeps students from judging a person of the past by today's standards and encourages them to think within the possibilities available at the time. On the topic of Temur Malik, comparing a map of the city's defence, the textbook text, and a supplementary source reveals, alongside courage, the geographic conditions, military tactics, and the limits of local resistance. The topic of Amir Temur should not be confined to military campaigns alone but studied together with centralisation, diplomacy, urban development, economic relations, and the contested aspects of his historical legacy.

The images of Najm al-Din Kubra and Mahmud Tarabi likewise allow personal courage to be studied without separating it from the social environment. On the topic of Najm al-Din Kubra, religious leadership, solidarity with the urban population, and moral choice under conditions of invasion can be analysed. Mahmud Tarabi's movement should be viewed not solely through the criterion of heroism or defeat, but within the context of thirteenth-century social discontent, political power, and mass mobilisation. When students work on questions such as “What factors influence a historical figure's transformation into a hero in popular memory?” and “What differences may exist between a contemporary source and the memory of a later period?”, they gain a deeper understanding of the concept of historical significance. Such tasks do not diminish national pride; on the contrary, they reinforce it with evidence, thought, and responsibility.

Japan's experience also demonstrates the need for caution regarding themes of heroism and patriotism. Bamkin notes that there is not always full alignment between moral education in policy documents and school practice [12]. Fukuoka and Takita-Ishii, by showing that young people perceive patriotic education differently,

demonstrate that this concept does not yield a single, unchanging outcome [13]. Sprenberg critically examines how certain war narratives in new moral-education textbooks are selectively presented within a narrow scope [14]; Nozaki surveys the long-running debates in Japan surrounding history textbooks, war memory, and national identity [15]. These studies serve as a methodological warning for Uzbekistan as well: the cultivation of historical memory should not be built by concealing complex facts, by absolutely demonising an adversary, or by turning national pride into an idea of superiority.

**Table 3. Source-based model for teaching the national hero image**

| Stage                      | Teacher's activity                                               | Student's activity                          | Expected outcome                    |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Problem                    | Poses the historical situation as a question                     | States an initial hypothesis                | Interest and problem-based thinking |
| Source criticism           | Provides a document, map, image or text                          | Examines author, time, purpose and evidence | Evidence-based understanding        |
| Context of the period      | Links the individual's decision to opportunities and constraints | Compares alternative paths                  | Historical perspective              |
| Consequence and evaluation | Discusses near- and long-term consequences                       | Gives a reasoned evaluation                 | Multi-factor historical analysis    |
| Reflection                 | Links to civic responsibility                                    | Draws conclusions for present-day life      | Conscious patriotism                |

*Note: the model is the author's conceptual proposal, based on a synthesis of normative and scholarly sources.*

#### 4. Discussion

The results of the analysis show that the similarities between Uzbekistan and Japan should be explained not by the existence of “one identical education model” but by the closeness of the functional mechanisms that govern quality. In both systems, standards, textbooks, teachers, assessment, and educational goals matter. However, their historical formation, school governance, pedagogical culture, and resources differ. It is therefore appropriate not to directly transplant Japan's practice but to adapt its principles to local conditions.

The most readily adaptable experience is the principle of lesson study. A history-subject methodological association could select a single topic, anticipate in advance what historical errors students might make, prepare a set of evidence, observe an open lesson, and discuss the results. Such a process treats the teacher not as an object of external control but as a specialist investigating their own practice. At the same time, lesson quality should be measured not by the external appearance of an open lesson, the

number of technical tools used, or students' active noise, but by progress toward the objective and by change in thinking.

Three particular risks were identified regarding the theme of national heroes. The first is mythologisation — turning a person into a flawless image detached from their period. The second is presentism — directly judging a past decision by today's political and moral concepts. The third is exclusive patriotism — linking love for one's own history to disregard for the historical experience of other peoples. The proposed model reduces these risks through source criticism, multi-factor causation, historical perspective, and reflection. As a result, while preserving its emotional impact, the hero image serves to cultivate a citizen who relies on evidence, accepts complexity, and understands their responsibility toward society.

### 5. Conclusion and Practical Recommendations

The common components ensuring lesson quality in the general secondary schools of Uzbekistan and Japan are the state standard, the curriculum, the textbook, the teacher's professional development, the student's active participation, and moral-civic education. While the strength of Japan's experience is seen in long-term professional collaboration and the culture of lesson study, Uzbekistan possesses a normative basis for a competency-based approach, the use of international assessments, and methodological renewal. The PISA 2022 results show that Uzbekistan faces the task of improving functional literacy, but these indicators cannot be mechanically applied to an individual subject or to a teacher's activity.

For the effective use of the national hero image in history lessons, an individual's activity should be examined on at least four levels: the verifiable historical fact; the political-social context of the period; the individual's alternative choices and constraints; and the near- and long-term consequences of the decision. By the end of the lesson, it is important that the student be able to answer the question “on what evidence do I base my assessment of this person's historical significance?” rather than merely repeating a ready-made definition of “who is a hero.”

In practical terms, three directions are recommended for history teachers: first, in lessons devoted to a hero figure, to compare at least two types of source; second, within methodological associations, to plan and observe one research lesson based on lesson study; and third, in assessment tasks, to measure argumentation, cause and effect, historical perspective, and civic reflection, in addition to memorisation. In this way, patriotism is formed not as an emotional appeal that simplifies historical truth, but as an evidence-based understanding of the homeland's history, a responsible acceptance of its achievements and complexities, and a readiness to contribute to the development of society.

The limitation of this research lies in its documentary and theoretical character. To determine the real pedagogical effectiveness of the proposed model, the next stage

should draw on lesson observation in schools across various regions, analysis of student written work, teacher interviews, and pre- and post- diagnostic tasks. In doing so, rather than general claims such as “the level of patriotism has increased,” changes should be measured in students' skills of verifying sources, recognising conflicting evidence, giving assessments grounded in a historical figure, and expressing civic conclusions. This approach would allow the article's conceptual findings to be tested against empirical evidence.

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