American Journal of Social and Humanitarian Research

Vol. 7 Issue 3 | **pp.** 196-202 | **ISSN:** 2690-9626
Available online @ https://globalresearchnetwork.us/index.php/ajshr

Article

The System of Training Museum Specialists and Tour Guides in Uzbekistan: History, Current State, and Prospects

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Abstract: The training of qualified museum personnel and tour guides represents one of the most pressing challenges facing contemporary Uzbekistan amid the rapid development of tourism and the museum sector. Given that young people account for 70% of museum visitors, the issue of museum staffing acquires particular significance. Despite a number of existing studies in this field, the training of museum specialists remains insufficiently examined. The article addresses the role of museums in the society of Uzbekistan, provides a historical analysis of museum staffing, explores the significance of museums in the tourism sector, and outlines current requirements for the training of museum personnel and tour guides. The study employs historical-comparative and analytical research methods. The source base comprises regulatory and legislative documents of the Republic of Uzbekistan, statistical data, scholarly works by Uzbek and foreign researchers, as well as the practical teaching experience of the course "Museology" at the Department of Archaeology, Karakalpak State University named after Berdakh. The experience of leading educational institutions in the country – the National Institute of Fine Arts and Design named after Kamoliddin Behzod and the International University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage "Silk Road" – is examined, and international approaches to the training of museum specialists are analysed. Based on the findings, specific recommendations are formulated for improving the museum personnel training system. In particular, the study substantiates the need for in-depth specialised training of museologists, proficiency in foreign languages, opportunities for internships at world-renowned museums, and the introduction of the subject "Museum Pedagogy" into the curricula of universities and pedagogical institutes.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, Museum, Museology, Training of Museum Personnel, Museology Courses, Tourism, Guide, Tour Guide, Department of Museology

Citation: Karamanova, G. The System of Training Museum Specialists and Tour Guides in Uzbekistan: History, Current State, and Prospects. American Journal of Social and Humanitarian Research 2026, 7(3), 196-202.

Received: 06th Feb 2026
Revised: 20th Feb 2026
Accepted: 10th Mar 2026
Published: 31st Mar 2026

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1. Introduction

Museums play a key role in preserving and promoting historical and cultural heritage, serving as a bridge between the past and the future.

The relevance of the research topic is emphasized by the words of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Sh. M. Mirziyoyev, in his address to the Oliy Majlis and the people of Uzbekistan, where it is noted that: "A separate program will be implemented to further familiarize the youth of the country and foreign tourists with the unique historical and cultural treasures of our land, and to develop museums in accordance with modern requirements" [1].

In the new Uzbekistan, at a new stage of historical development, appropriate conditions are being created for the development of museum affairs. A legislative

framework for museology has been established, and new tasks have been set for museums under modern conditions.

Today, there are more than 100 state museums in the Republic of Uzbekistan [2]. The materials collected in them serve as a kind of school for young people. In this sense, museums are no longer merely a mirror of history but also serve as a rich source for the development of science and as a foundation for the growth of the intellectual potential of the nation [3].

This, in turn, makes museums not only objects of scientific research but also educational centers, where the demand is steadily increasing for specialists—from tour guides capable of properly analyzing and explaining invaluable masterpieces preserved in museums to innovative managers and collection custodians in the context of a market economy.

Considering that 70% of museum visitors are young people, the issue of providing museums with knowledgeable and highly competent specialists in this field is of particular importance [4].

Among the studies devoted to museums and museology in Uzbekistan, the works of N. Sadykova play a significant role [5]. These works comprehensively examine the development, achievements, and problems of museum activity in Uzbekistan over nearly a century, as well as the training of museum personnel based on archival documents from the period before World War II; however, later periods are not covered.

The studies of Zh. Kh. Ismailova reflect issues of modern global museology, the role of Uzbekistan's museums within it, as well as problems of museum pedagogy [6].

Scientific works by A. Almeev, D. A. Kurbanova, D. T. Kuryazova, and others, as well as textbooks and teaching manuals, cover the activities of museums in Uzbekistan during the years of independence [7]. It should be noted that these works only partially address the issue of training museum personnel, and innovations in this field during the independence period are not sufficiently reflected. Overall, the topic has not been comprehensively studied in scientific research.

2. Materials and Methods

The methodological basis of the study consists of historical-comparative and analytical methods. The research is based on a comprehensive analysis of normative legal documents of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the field of museum affairs and tourism, in particular the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 68 dated April 12, 2010, and Presidential Resolutions No. PP-3815 (2018), No. PP-5270 (2021), and No. PP-261 (2022). The study also draws on statistical data, monographs, and dissertation research (N. Sadykova, Zh. Ismailova, R. Almeev, D. Kuryazova, etc.), as well as foreign studies on the training of museum specialists [8].

According to the Regulation on the procedure for training museum specialists, advanced training, and retraining of museum workers, approved by Appendix No. 7 to the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated April 12, 2010, No. 68, the issue of training museum specialists is substantiated as follows: in general education schools, academic lyceums, and professional colleges, students are introduced to museums through relevant subjects and receive basic general knowledge; in research institutes and higher educational institutions, scientific personnel in the field of museums are trained through doctoral and postgraduate programs; in higher educational institutions offering museum-related programs, students are provided with knowledge of the general theory of museology, the history of museums and museology, the current state and future prospects, international museum practices, modern technologies used in museums, advanced professional experience, museum management, documentation, collection (fund) work, communication theory, relevant laws and regulations, existing

problems in the field and methods for their solution, and other discipline-related knowledge [9].

Students also undergo introductory, academic, and industrial internships in major organizations and institutions of the republic that possess advanced museums, museum objects, and collections, in order to consolidate their theoretical knowledge. Bachelor's and master's students master the methodology of world museums, the relationship between museums and society, preservation of monuments, artistic analysis of artworks, art management, technologies of artistic objects, restoration of artworks, and scientific research activities. Graduates defend their theses at the bachelor's and master's levels on chosen topics. At the doctoral level, research is conducted on theoretical and practical problems of museology that remain insufficiently studied or unexplored [10].

From a historical perspective, beginning in 1930, courses for training museum workers were organized in Uzbekistan. One such course at the Museum of the History and Revolution of Central Asia (SAMIR) initially admitted 25 participants; later, the number of students increased to 40, and the duration of study was six months [11].

During World War II, exhibitions of many museums in Uzbekistan were dismantled, and research activities and staffing levels were reduced. Nine employees from the Historical Museum and more than ten from the Samarkand Museum went to the фронт [12].

The wartime period also saw the presence of evacuated scholars in Tashkent, including V. V. Struve, B. D. Grekov, S. V. Bakhrushin, E. E. Bertels, N. Yu. Yakubovsky, M. V. Nechkina, and others, many of whom were members of museum academic councils [13].

The difficulties of wartime significantly affected the condition of museums. Many museums were reduced or completely closed. There was a shortage of specialists, as many museum employees were killed on the fronts of World War II. As a result, it became necessary to address issues such as organizing museum management, restoring and creating new exhibitions, preserving and accounting for collections, and training qualified personnel.

Central museums and higher educational institutions sent their graduates to museums in the national republics of the former Soviet Union, including Uzbekistan. In Uzbekistan, in 1937, the total number of museum employees was 66, including 45 scientific and 52 scientific-technical staff; by 1940, the total number reached 310, including 77 scientific and 86 scientific-technical staff [14].

However, it should be noted that there were no educational institutions specifically dedicated to training museum personnel [15]. Among the specialists who made a significant contribution to the development of museum work in Uzbekistan during the period from 1930 to 1970 were ethnographers, archaeologists, art historians, and museologists such as T. Mirgiyazov, Sh. Inogamov, M. Bikzhanova, I. Sukharev, M. Yusupov, M. Kaplunova, S. Krukovskaya, A. Khaitov, and A. Morozova [16].

3. Results and Discussion

Today, the Department of Museology at the National Institute of Fine Arts and Design named after Kamoliddin Behzod trains professional museum specialists. The museum education program began its activity in 1997, and in 2001 it became an independent department. Currently, the department employs 4 Doctors of Science, 4 Candidates of Science, 2 associate professors, 1 senior lecturer, and 16 lecturers teaching students. About 20 textbooks and teaching manuals in specialized subjects have been published by the department's professors and lecturers. The department cooperates with the Council of Museums of Uzbekistan, major museums of the republic, the UNESCO Office in Uzbekistan, the Saint Petersburg State Institute of Culture, and Keimyung University in Korea [17].

In order to implement the tasks outlined in paragraph 7 of the protocol resolution (No. 19580-xx dated December 31, 2017), adopted at the meeting held on December 25, 2017, with the participation of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Sh. M. Mirziyoyev, the following bachelor's programs were established:

5112500 – Museum Pedagogy;

5151900 – Museology (museum management and cultural tourism);

5151900 – Museology (expert evaluation, conservation, and restoration of museum objects).

A master's degree program titled "Museology, Conservation, Restoration, and Preservation of Historical and Cultural Objects" has also been introduced. Leading specialists, including Doctors of Science, teach students at the department. Notably, in December 2019, a branch of the Department of Museology was opened at the State Museum of Arts of Uzbekistan to enable students to apply their theoretical knowledge in practice [18]. The opening of a second branch at the State Museum of History of Uzbekistan on January 15, 2020, played a significant role not only in the department's development but also in training highly qualified museum specialists for the entire republic.

Since 2018, a master's program in "Museology, Conservation, Restoration, and Preservation of Historical and Cultural Objects" has also been opened at the Department of Fine Arts and Engineering Graphics of the Faculty of Arts at Bukhara State University, with 5 students admitted [19].

At the State Museum of History of Uzbekistan, for the first time, an academic council was established for researchers specializing in museology. A scientific and methodological council was also created to coordinate research and methodological activities across museums. Their establishment marked the beginning of the formation of a museology school in Uzbekistan and the development of an effective system for training bachelor's, master's, and PhD-level specialists [20].

Considering the example of Kazakhstan, only two universities currently provide bachelor-level training in museum studies and heritage protection: Al-Farabi Kazakh National University and M. Auezov South Kazakhstan State University.

The core of the curriculum consists of professional disciplines such as "Scientific Fund Work of the Museum," "Museum Exhibition," "Protection of Historical and Cultural Monuments," "Museum Management and Marketing," and "Museum Pedagogy."

Elective disciplines include subjects that deepen students' knowledge, such as "History of Collecting," "Working with People with Disabilities in Museums," and "Open-Air Museums." Employers and public organizations may also propose additional courses reflecting their needs for specific specializations.

A master's or PhD degree in "Museum Studies and Heritage Protection" can be obtained only at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, which received its PhD training license in 2017 [21].

The experience of Mari State University is also noteworthy, where special emphasis is placed on cooperation with employers. For example, students' coursework often consists of projects commissioned by museums. Students actively conduct guided tours for visitors to the Republic of Mari El. Practical training is strongly emphasized: first-year students undertake introductory museum and archaeological field practice; second-year students complete collection (fund) practice; third-year students engage in museum-pedagogical practice; and fourth-year students complete pre-graduation internships [22].

Students of history-related specialties in Uzbekistan study the subject "Museology," but professional museum specialists are not specifically trained. This subject introduces students to museum work, including collection acquisition, preservation, and documentation.

Most museum employees today are graduates of history programs. One example is the Faculty of History at the National University of Uzbekistan, particularly the Department of Source Studies and Museology, established in 1991. Teaching includes both theoretical and practical training, with practical classes conducted in archives, museums, and manuscript collections.

The subject "Museology" is also taught at the Department of Archaeology of Karakalpak State University named after Berdakh. In teaching practice, special emphasis is placed on linking theory with practice.

For example, a seminar titled "Museology — from Theory to Practice" was held at the State Museum of the History of Karakalpak Literature named after Berdakh. Students presented exhibits in English and Karakalpak as tour guides and delivered presentations on topics such as museum roles, development, and global experience. Interactive methods and group work were used, and museum staff evaluated student performance.

The museum's exhibitions aim to present literary heritage from ancient times to the present, including manuscripts, folklore, and works of modern writers. Notably, the museum houses over 2,000 items from the personal library of the People's Poet I. Yusupov and more than 100 items from T. Zhumamuratov. Guides enhance presentations by citing literary works, demonstrating the museum's unique approach.

As A. Sundieva notes, modern trends in museum development require new approaches to training museum personnel, especially in cultural and educational activities that incorporate museum pedagogy, psychology, sociology, and socio-cultural competencies.

Since 2013, the course "Museum and Tourism" has been introduced into the curriculum to train specialists in museum and tourism activities.

In accordance with Presidential Resolution No. 3815 (June 28, 2018), the International University of Tourism "Silk Road" was established in Samarkand. It became the first tourism university in Uzbekistan with international status, offering education in English. Among its programs is a bachelor's degree for tour guides and interpreters.

Presidential Resolution No. PP-5270 (October 30, 2021) further enhanced continuous education systems in tourism, cultural heritage, and museology. The university was renamed the International University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage "Silk Road," offering master's programs in museology and heritage preservation.

The university attracts international experts and highly qualified Uzbek specialists. For example, in 2021, Professor Raymond Joseph Hofmann (a graduate of Harvard and Oxford) was appointed Vice-Rector.

The university has also introduced a double-degree system and established partnerships with institutions in Indonesia and China. In 2019, a branch of the Paris Academy of Panthéon-Sorbonne University and a UNESCO Chair in Cultural Tourism were opened.

To regulate the profession of guides, legal frameworks have been developed, including certification procedures. The Tourism Training and Consulting Center conducts qualification testing.

The Association of Guides of Uzbekistan was established in 2019, and international forums have been organized. With the growth of tourism, demand for professional guides is increasing. Training programs and certification systems are actively implemented nationwide.

National guide training schools operate in Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, and Urgench. Guides undergo annual training and certification every three years, based on internationally aligned programs.

Exchange of experience with leading international museums also plays an important role in improving qualifications. The introduction of advanced technologies and modern communication methods remains a key requirement.

During the President's visit to France on October 9, 2018, the Uzbekistan Art and Culture Development Foundation and the Louvre Museum signed a cooperation memorandum. It includes training of specialists, implementation of advanced museum technologies, and development of conservation and restoration practices.

4. Conclusion

In the modern era of advanced technologies, high demands are placed on tour guides. For example, in Tashkent, the first interactive science museum for children was opened in the "Next" shopping and entertainment center. It features two small rooms where children receive answers to questions such as where lightning comes from, how animals, birds, and insects see, or how a simple lever can lift tons of weight. Even chemical technologists are involved in demonstrating experiments for children. All explanations are provided by the guide. This shows that today's guides must be well-rounded specialists, combining the roles of both educators and psychologists.

Therefore, the creation of various modern museums also requires highly qualified and versatile personnel. For instance, the establishment of an ecology museum in the Muynak district of Karakalpakstan requires knowledge both in ecology and in museum studies. As noted above, exhibitions aimed at children, along with museum pedagogy, also require strong psychological competence.

On May 27, 2022, Presidential Resolution No. PP-261 "On measures for the development of the service sector in museums" was adopted. It is aimed at supporting museum activities in the country, improving marketing policies, developing service sectors comprehensively, effectively implementing innovative technologies in museums, and creating new modern exhibitions dedicated to the history of the Uzbek people and statehood, the First and Second Renaissance periods, and the lives and activities of great scholars, as well as promoting the rich historical and cultural heritage preserved in museum collections.

In providing museums in Uzbekistan with qualified personnel, it is advisable to focus on the following issues:

1. A museum specialist should be able to work in any type of museum and possess in-depth knowledge relevant to the museum's profile. For example, in historical museums, they should not only understand museum practices but also have a deep knowledge of history.
2. To clearly and accurately convey the content of exhibitions, historical monuments, and archaeological complexes to visitors, guides and tour guides should know several foreign languages and have a well-developed, literate command of their native language.
3. It is necessary, where possible, to organize internships for museology students in leading museums of the world in order to study international experience.
4. The creation of separate exhibitions for children in museums of Uzbekistan is a requirement of the time, which necessitates training specialists and guides capable of working professionally with a young audience.
5. It is advisable to introduce the subject "Museum Pedagogy" into all bachelor's degree programs of universities and pedagogical institutes.

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