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ACTIVITIES OF THE SCHOOL EDUCATION SYSTEM IN UZBEKISTAN DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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Abstract

This article examines issues such as the difficulties associated with the functioning of the school education system in Uzbekistan during World War II, problems of education, and various types of work activities of teachers and students.

Key words: war, school, education, teachers, students, front, task, industry, agriculture, work, difficulties.

In the early years of the Second World War, when the conflict shifted into the territories of the USSR, significant difficulties emerged within the school education system. A substantial portion of public education workers and school teachers were drafted to the front lines, while upper-grade students were mobilized into production lines. Furthermore, a part of the school buildings was converted into military hospitals and military training centers. This situation forced schools to operate in multiple shifts. Many school buildings were located far from residential areas, and the living standards of the population deteriorated severely. As a result, the number of students in schools during the 1942–1943 academic year decreased by 421,000 compared to the 1940–1941 academic year, and many small primary schools were turned into branches of fully structured primary schools. Additionally, 360 school buildings were handed over to military units evacuated to the republic, hospitals, and similar military administrations [1.492.]. Due to being designated for defense needs, these schools were merged with neighboring ones.

During the 1942–1943 academic year, nearly 200 primary schools could not operate at all due to the shortage of teachers in the republic [2.208.]. Providing existing schools with fuel became difficult, and stationery, textbooks, visual aids, school supplies, equipment, and similar necessities fell into short supply. The issue of providing students with clothing and footwear was also in a dire state; all of these factors caused a decline in student attendance and academic performance rates [3.81.].

In the initial years of the war period, dropping out of school due to the long distances involved became a common occurrence. This, in turn, led to an increase in crime rates among school-aged children. For this reason, the Council of People's Commissariats of the Uzbek SSR issued Order No. 833 on July 13, 1942. This order gave a series of instructions to review the network of school branches in order to bring schools closer to students' residential areas, improve the quality of education in the republic's schools, and re-engage children in school education.

However, the implementation of this order failed due to the negligence of many regional, district, and city public education department heads, as well as

regional officials. Consequently, because school branches remained far from students' residential areas, many students stopped attending school. Because an adequate number of students could not be gathered in the classrooms, classes were not formed. In some cases, this led to the closure of entire schools, thereby reducing the total number of schools.

During the war years, school students combined their daily studies with various types of labor. The heads of regional, district, and city public education departments demonstrated sluggishness in fully drawing school-aged children back to school. Young students were detached from schools and worked on collective farms (kolkhozes), state farms (sovkhozes), or individual farms of collective farmers. For instance, in July 1941, 17.2 thousand school students worked in the fields of collective farms in the Fergana region [4.59.].

Under the impact of the war, a significant slackening in educational and upbringing work was observed in schools across certain areas of our republic during the 1941–1942 academic year. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan issued directives aimed at properly organizing student upbringing and preventing indiscipline [5.47.]. The pedagogical staff of most schools in the republic drew the right conclusions from this and brought about a sharp turnaround in educational and upbringing work. In many places, parents' conferences and meetings were held to explain the duties outlined in the directive, and appropriate measures were established. For example, educational-industrial workshops were organized to involve students in socially useful labor and to prevent them from being left unsupervised during their free time outside of classes [6.129.].

Despite the hardships of the war years, the leadership of the republic and public education organizations continued to take practical measures to preserve the network of schools, strengthen their material foundation, and implement the law on universal education.

Short-term courses were organized to supply schools, particularly primary classes, with teachers. These courses trained 16,000 teachers between 1941 and 1943. Effective work was also carried out to return teachers working in other fields back to the classroom. Notably, by the beginning of the 1944–1945 academic year, 55,000 teachers in Uzbekistan had returned to their school duties. In that same year, 796 teachers in the Fergana region were enrolled in distance learning at the Kokand Pedagogical and Teachers' Institute and the correspondence departments of pedagogical colleges [7.230.]. In Kokand and Margilan, lecture courses for teacher professional development regularly provided listeners with lectures on pedagogical topics.

The Andijan Women's Pedagogical College also made a productive contribution toward providing existing schools in the regions of the Fergana Valley with teaching staff. In the 1944–1945 academic year alone, 241 graduates completed their studies at this educational institution and received placements to work in schools [8.7-8.].

On July 23, 1943, the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR issued an important decree regarding the replenishment of the teaching staff in the schools of the Uzbek SSR. This decree addressed the issues of training national pedagogical cadres for Uzbekistan's schools and improving the knowledge of the existing teaching staff, while emphasizing the significance of training teachers from among Uzbek women for local schools. According to the decree, short-term courses were opened to train teaching staff. There were two types of courses: the first trained teachers for grades I–IV, and the second trained subject teachers for grades V–VII. Uzbek girls with a seven-year or complete secondary education were recruited for these courses. These courses remained operational until the end of the war [9.128-129.].

During the war years, educators and teachers also provided immense help to the government in fulfilling frontline tasks in industry and agriculture, as well as in preparing military combat reserves and defense funds.

In addition to formal education and upbringing, pedagogues carried out educational-political work among the population. During the Second World War, several thousand teachers served as agitators and propagandists in the Uzbek SSR. In the schools and educational institutions of the Andijan region alone, 3,862 educators simultaneously performed the duties of propagandists and agitators [10.128.]. They instilled in the population the mindset that fighting for victory was the most pressing task of the day.

Apart from school duties, female teachers, together with their students, actively participated in agricultural work, collecting funds for defense foundations, organizing labor Saturdays (subbotniks) and Sundays (voskresniks), preparing gifts for the front lines and for the blockaded population of Leningrad (now Saint Petersburg), collecting scrap and non-ferrous metals, taking patronage over military hospitals, and engaging in other patriotic deeds. They were also involved in showing care for frontline fighters as well as for the children of evacuees [11.131.].

One of the innovations in the education system of the Uzbek SSR during the war years was the introduction of military-physical training among students, which made teaching the basics of air raid defense and chemical defense mandatory for all students. Thousands of students passed the standards for BGTO ("Be Ready for Labor and Defense"), GTO ("Ready for Labor and Defense"), and GSO ("Ready for Sanitary Defense"). Teachers were assigned responsible tasks for cultivating conscious discipline among children.

In conclusion, numerous difficulties emerged within the school education system of Uzbekistan during the years of the Second World War. Public education workers and a large portion of school teachers were mobilized to the front. Upper-grade school students were forced to work in various industrial sectors and agricultural fields. A portion of school buildings was repurposed into military hospitals and military training centers. Because many school buildings were located far from residential areas, a large number of students stopped attending



school. School teachers provided great assistance to the government by fulfilling frontline assignments in industry and agriculture. Furthermore, beyond standard education and upbringing, pedagogues conducted educational-political work among the population, contributing their share to instilling the spirit of victory among the people.

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