The State of Public Education in Uzbekistan in the 1950s

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Abstract. The article analyses the construction of schools, the difference in the level of educational institutions between urban and rural areas, the issue of women's education, and innovations in the education system in Uzbekistan. It is concluded that the sphere of education as an important part of social life has developed as an instrument of state policy.

Key words: public education in Uzbekistan, school network, women's education, 50s of the twentieth century, the educational process.

Introduction

As an important part of social life, education has developed as a major focus of state policy. The 1950s was a turning point in the history of Soviet society. This was primarily due to the post-war reconstruction of the country, the beginning of the revision of Stalin's policy, difficult diplomatic relations, and contradictory socio-economic and cultural reforms, which were carried out under the strong control of the party organs. It should be noted that there were also positive results, which were reflected in the field of education.

It should be noted that during the war years the network of schools and the number of students were reduced and the teaching process was not properly organized; many children dropped out of school for a variety of reasons. The network of schools in Uzbekistan and the number of pupils in them fell during the five post-war years (academic years 1945/46 - 1950/51) as compared to the 1940/41 academic year [3: p.114]. During the war years some of the teachers were given short-term training courses and sent to remote rural schools. Unfortunately, neither their level of education nor their methodological training was adequate.

Main body

In the materials of the XIX Congress of the CPSU, which was held in October 1952, the directives for the five-year development plan of the USSR for 1951-1955 stated the necessity to complete the work on the introduction of the general secondary education. The task was set to switch from seven-year to ten-year general education in the first stages in the capitals of all national republics, major industrial cities and regional centres, to expand the construction of schools, to establish polytechnic education in secondary schools.[2: p.362-364]. However, the weak economic situation of the country, limited resources, the need to implement the set goals with a "quick solution" characteristic of Soviet reality in just five years became an obstacle to their implementation.

Due to the introduction of universal compulsory education the number of pupils increased and due to the lack of facilities the shifts in schools were changed to 2-3 shifts. In 1953 the UzSSR Ministry of Education provided the following data on the republic's schools [11: p.54]:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of school</th>
<th>Number of schools</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>424,345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven year school</td>
<td>2652</td>
<td>671,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>1794</td>
<td>150,054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5104</td>
<td>1,246,194</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These schools employed 55,000 teachers. In the 1950/51 school year, out of a total of 1,172,064 children aged 7 to 15 registered in the country, 16,407 were not in school and 10,915 had never attended school.

71% of these children lived in rural areas and most of them were not enrolled. There were a number of reasons for this situation: children worked in factories or on farms to earn money (25%); schools were situated further away from their homes (7.6%); girls were married, etc. (65.5%) [19: p.31-32].

It should be noted that in 1952 the allocation of funds from the budgets of the Union republics for the school sector had more than doubled since 1940. In Uzbekistan, for example, 30.7 million roubles was allotted to public education in 1940, and in 1952 this figure reached 81.1 million (an increase of 264%) [18]. But these funds were insufficient for the full development of the school network.

Little attention was paid to the construction of schools in rural areas. In the 1950s the construction of schools was started at the expense of collective farms in addition to the budget of the Ministry of Public Education. The schools were not built according to standard designs and most schools did not meet even basic sanitary requirements [8: p.147]. Archival documents show that most of the schools were in a state of disrepair, many of them showed a shortage of classrooms, even a shortage of desks, a shortage of coal in winter [7: p. 63].

Between 1951 and 1958 the collective farms of the republic completed 1,016 school buildings for 107,500 places [16: p.318]. This led to an increase in the number of schools in the rural areas of the republic to 2091, 155 more schools than in 1946 [15: p.83]. However, this was not enough.

The gap between urban and rural schools was pronounced. As much attention was paid to the development of schools in the cities and major centres of the country. Whereas in large cities such as Tashkent, Samarkand, Andijan, Kokand and Chirchik, universal compulsory education was well established, the school network in remote areas lagged far behind. This was particularly evident in Bukhara, Surkhandarya and Kashkadarya Provinces.

In the mountainous areas and pastoral areas, the population was limited to primary education only. Due to the remoteness of these areas from schools, children could not continue their education after the 4th grade [3: p.125].

Despite the opening of boarding schools for herders' children at schools in district centres, in practice its implementation has been unsatisfactory. In some districts insufficient attention has been paid to the opening of boarding schools or the organisation of transport for children from remote areas in cars or carts. This fact demonstrates the unsatisfactory and low level of general education in remote and rural areas of the Republic. An article entitled "The urgent needs of a village school" was published in the Pravda newspaper on 24 January 1954, revealing a number of shortcomings in school education in Uzbekistan, especially in rural areas. At a time when classes X-XI were being opened in the cities, schools in rural areas remained seven-year schools.

The biggest problem in the Soviet education system in the 1950s, including Uzbekistan, was
the issue of female education. Due to the difficulties of post-war years there were more and more cases of girls being engaged in domestic work, dropping out of school, and not being sent to educational institutions. In 1950, schools in Uzbekistan were attended by 549,500 girls, of whom 371,400 were from the local ethnic groups. This figure was 80.4 thousand more than in 1946 [15: p.83]. Despite this, in the 1950/51 school year the percentage of Uzbek students in the upper grades of secondary schools was very low. If for this school year in seven-year schools there were 13171, or 30% of Uzbek girls, in X classes of secondary schools their number decreased to 14.3%. Such a picture can be seen in Karakalpakstan 6.4%, Surkhandarya Province 9.3% [12: p.15].

In the 1950/51 school year there were 205 boarding schools with 8,827 pupils, of whom only 600 were girls [15.p.84]. The dropout rate for local girls was particularly high in Samarkand, Andijan and Fergana Provinces. In Fergana Province alone, in the summer of 1950 1,198 Uzbek girls left school, of whom 673 were fifth-graders. The number of women in working schools was also low; for example, in Namangan Province alone they accounted for only 16% [5.1.15]. Many women working in industrial enterprises in Namangan itself did not have even a seven-year education.

In view of these shortcomings, special attention was paid to women's education and special measures were elaborated to develop it [6: p.20]. First and foremost the determination of the number of girls who had dropped out of school and had not completed their teacher training courses was considered. Starting from February 1951 activists from all makhallas and settlements of Uzbekistan with the help of school teachers started work on identification of illiterate and uneducated women and preparation of groups for their education [12: p.17]. The groups were led by schoolteachers, high-school students and cultural figures. Fifty per cent of places in boarding schools and dormitories were allocated to local girls. Work was stepped up to involve them in mass cultural events and students' scientific circles. Awareness-raising, especially among the local population, has been stepped up to attract girls to education. In particular, special boarding schools were established for girls of 5-10 classes and the involvement of girls, especially older women, in pedagogical colleges was intensified.

In the 1950s this question was covered in the annual reports submitted to the Ministry of National Education of the Republic [9: pp. 115-118]. What were the main reasons for the early departure of women from school? First of all:

- Low level of educational work in schools, especially in rural areas;
- Leaving pupils to repeat a year and the negligence of educational establishments in this matter;
- Misreporting of children's dates of birth in the household books of village councils, which resulted in their age exceeding the school level, especially the age of girls on the eve of completing primary or seven years of school;
- Parents did not accept the fact that their daughter was at an older age studying at a lower school, and for this reason they took them out of school and gave them away in marriage, sometimes as underage girls;
- Although Government Order No. 1138 of 18 October 1954 was issued on the allocation of 80 per cent of boarding school places to girls, it has not been fully implemented in any region.
- In state boarding schools, 35.6% of children were girls. The boarding school experience was not well suited to local circumstances, and parents were reluctant to send their daughters there;
- Arrangements for school-age children in remote areas of the republic were not well organised. This was also one of the reasons why girls were not sent to schools.
- There were few female teachers in the republic's schools during these years.

For example, in the first half of the 1956/57 school year 497 schoolgirls of local ethnic origin
dropped out of school because of marriage [9: p.116]. In that academic year the percentage of local girls in Uzbek schools was as follows: in grades I-IV - 41%, in grade VIII - 30.3%, in grade IX - 26.2%, in grade X - 24.7%.

Certainly, thanks to intervention of higher organisations and efforts of education employees, some positive results were achieved in school enrolment of girls in the 1950s.

While in the 1952/53 school year 7555 local girls had been enrolled in all eight grades, by the 1956/57 school year this figure had already reached 22,659 [9: p.117]. Accordingly, the number rose from 3,587 to 1,433 in the 9th grade and from 1,876 to 1,0242 in the 10th.

A number of measures have begun to show results. Whereas in the 1952/53 school year the female school dropout rate was 2.4%, in the 1955/56 school year this figure dropped by 1.5%. In other words, in the beginning of 1952/53 school year, out of 370 745 girls, 11 567 left school by the end of the year, and in 1955/56 school year - out of 369 739 girls, 5 525 left school [9: p.117].

From 1953 to 1955 a number of laws were passed at the state level in Uzbekistan, including those in the field of education, about the serious shortcomings in the work with women [5: p.337]. Special measures were drawn up to develop women's education in the country[6. l.20]. Special articles were published in the media[1]. As a result of these measures, the number of local girls among graduates of grades VII and X increased.

For example, only in Namangan region in 1953 1,649 girls graduated from class VII and 147 from class X. In 1955 3,904 girls graduated from class VII and 384 from class X. In 1956 5000 girls graduated from class VII and over 800 from class X. The number of local girls entering institutions of higher education has increased. In 1955 170 girls were accepted to the Namangan Pedagogical Institute [5: p.337].

Six pedagogical and four pre-school educational institutions admitted only girls. They were even called "Women's Educational Institutions". Naturally, boys did not apply to these educational institutions. In addition, the Kokand Teachers' Institute, opened in 1943, was transformed into the Women's Teachers' Institute (and since 1954 - the Women's Pedagogical Institute) [15: p.85]. In the academic year 1954/55 alone, 200 girls were admitted to the Institute.

In the early 1950s the issue of creating XI-pedagogical classes in the education system was raised. This was a "quick and hasty" measure to solve the problem of the shortage of teachers and to supplement schools with female teachers from the local population, although such classes were opened in 1946 in secondary schools in 7 major cities of the Republic. Measures were taken to popularise the 11th teacher training classes, explanations were given through the radio and the local press, and their graduates were promised the title of "teacher" and a monthly stipend of 180 rubles. In 1953/54 such classes were opened in 9 schools of Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Andijan and Namangan and 184 teachers were trained that year [15: p.91]. However, such classes functioned only until 1954, as the level of these specialists did not meet the requirements. Moreover, from the early 1950s, special groups for Uzbek girls were opened in some higher education institutions, including the Namangan Teacher Training Institute, the Tashkent Evening Teacher Training Institute and the Tashkent Institute of Foreign Languages. The responsibility for popularising the teaching profession among young people, especially girls, lay with the heads of all pedagogical educational institutions [6: p.48].

In 1952 there were six pedagogical institutes operating in Uzbekistan. It is worth noting that in 1950-51 there were 42,224 students studying at 37 universities in Uzbekistan [4: p.58]. Thus, the proportion of pedagogical institutes in Uzbekistan at that time was 40.8%. From 1956, pedagogical universities were transferred to 5-year education and new disciplines related to polytechnic education were introduced [17: p.116].
The 1950s saw the expansion of the network of evening schools for workers and rural youth in Uzbekistan, as elsewhere in the Soviet country.

The 1950s saw a number of changes in the Soviet school system. In particular, until the 1950s the Soviet education system was based on fee-paying education in the upper grades of general, specialized secondary and higher educational establishments. Although the Decree of the Council of Ministers of the USSR of 6 June 1954 on abolition of tuition fees in secondary, specialized secondary and higher education in the USSR [14]. Pursuant to this decree, its implementation came into force only after September 1, 1956.

On July 1, 1954, the Council of Ministers of the USSR adopted a decree "On the introduction of joint education in Moscow, Leningrad and other cities" [14:p.192]. It should be noted that prior to this decree, girls and boys in the Soviet educational system were taught in separate schools.

Naturally, on the basis of this decree the Uzbek government adopted Decree On Introduction of co-education in Tashkent and other cities of the Uzbek SSR (15 July 1954, No. 750) [10: p.60]. From the academic year 1954/55, co-education between girls and boys was introduced in the lower grades and in subsequent years in the upper grades. It was decided that the number of boys and girls should be equal when schools were co-educational. There was considerable controversy over this issue among the public. The implementation of this measure was very closely monitored and the Ministry of Education was entrusted with a great deal of responsibility. In particular, regular reports on the subject were received from headmasters of seven-year and city secondary schools. Party and Komsomol activists were ‘mobilised’ in this process, to popularise the decision among the population. Relations between boys and girls were to be on a "friendly" level only. On 19 July 1954 the Ministry of National Education of the USSR elaborated a special manual No. A-16 for carrying out this work in the national republics [10: p.63].

Another innovation introduced into the education system was the introduction of uniforms in the country (Decree No 1491 of the USSR Council of Ministers of 16 September 1953) [13: p.244]. Undoubtedly, the introduction of uniform for pupils had an educational value. However, the process was also approached from the point of view of Soviet politics: "The uniform defined the reputation of the school, reinforced the sense of 'friendship' among pupils, strengthened discipline among teachers and pupils and increased the knowledge and skills of the students". The uniform was seasonal, switching to winter uniform from October 1st and to summer uniform from May 1st. The introduction of the uniform was first introduced in the school year 1953/54 in large towns, such as Tashkent, Samarkand, Andijan, Bukhara, Karshi, Namangan, Termez, Fergana, Urgench and Nukus, and from the school year 1954/55 in small towns and workers settlements, from 1955/56 in all districts of the republic and under strict control [13: p.245].

In 1956-1957 in several schools in Tashkent the teaching of oriental languages started: Arabic, Hindi and Chinese, and these languages were introduced in grades 2,3,4 for five hours a week [3: p.63]. It should be noted that schools specialising in oriental languages aroused great interest, particularly among Uzbeks.

From 1959 silver and gold medals were introduced for students who completed school with exemplary discipline and excellent grades.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, Uzbekistan's educational system in the 1950s was developing as an integral part of the Soviet educational system and by established standards. But the challenges of addressing serious deficiencies in schooling and preventing children from dropping out of school were met. This required
a great deal of effort and led to an increase in the literacy rate. Teachers began to use new teaching methods in schools.

Although the solution to women's education was carried out under the strict control of the authorities, sometimes of a coercive nature, a number of positive results were achieved. However, as a result of the involvement of most girls in teaching and the conversion of some universities and colleges into specialised women's institutions, the teaching profession gradually became a women's profession. This led to a situation where in the 1970s and 1980s, the bulk of the teaching staff, particularly in primary and pre-school education, was made up of women.

The Law “On Strengthening the Relationship between School and Life and on the Further Development of the System of National Education” in the USSR, adopted on 24 December 1958, determined the further development of the Soviet education system.

REFERENCE

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