

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Introduction of Evening and Correspondence Education in The Higher Education System of The Uzbek SSR During the Soviet Era

Najimidinova Shoxsanam Sharobidin qizi

Doctoral student at Andijan State University, Lecturer at Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages, Uzbekistan

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Abstract

This article analyzes the establishment, development, and effectiveness of the higher education system in the Uzbek SSR through evening and correspondence (part-time) study forms during the period 1929–1939.

KEY WORDS

Higher education, evening education, correspondence (part-time) education, Tashkent Evening Pedagogical Institute, quality of education.

INTRODUCTION

In the 1920s and 1930s, the higher education system in the Uzbek SSR developed rapidly. While promoting the economic and ideological goals of the Soviet government, the number of higher education institutions increased, and new forms of personnel training—evening and correspondence education—were introduced. These forms were primarily aimed at the urgent task of producing college-educated specialists for the national economy.

The first evening higher education institution in the Uzbek SSR was the Tashkent Evening Pedagogical Institute, opened in 1929. This institution was established to meet the republic's growing demand for pedagogical staff. In the period leading up to the Second World War, evening pedagogical institutes were opened under the auspices of the Fergana and Bukhara Pedagogical Institutes in the cities of Andijan, Kokand, Margilan, and Samarkand.

In 1931, following an initiative by the faculty of the Fergana Pedagogical Institute, evening pedagogical institutes were established in Fergana, Andijan, and Margilan [1.14.].

By the 1934–1935 academic year, the Uzbek SSR hosted

evening pedagogical institutes in Tashkent, Samarkand, Fergana, Kokand, Bukhara, and Margilan. As of September 1934, they enrolled 1,108 students, including 331 at the Tashkent Evening Pedagogical Institute and 243 at the Samarkand Evening Pedagogical Institute [2.12.].

The Tashkent Evening Pedagogical Institute led the republic in training pedagogical staff without requiring them to leave their jobs. While the institute had 331 students in September 1934, by February 1938, the number had nearly tripled to 1,094. Specifically, 509 students were enrolled in Uzbek-language groups, 388 in Russian groups, and 200 in foreign-language groups [3.39.]. A year later, in January 1939, the student body increased to 1,297—a fourfold increase compared to 1934. Among these students, 316 were Uzbek, 40 were from other local ethnic groups, 400 were Russian, and 241 were from other nationalities. Notably, 558 of these students were women, 125 of whom were Uzbek women [4.126.].

It should be noted that this growth was particularly prominent at the Tashkent Evening Pedagogical Institute. The situation

in other cities was quite different. For instance, while the Fergana Evening Pedagogical Institute had 218 students in September 1934, by January 1939, it had only 56 students—a fourfold decline [5.19.].

During the period under review, correspondence education existed in many of the republic's higher education institutions. For example, a correspondence pedagogical institute existed in Fergana in 1931, but no information regarding its structure, student composition, or numbers has been preserved in official documents [6.8.]. This suggests that in its early years, the correspondence education process was poorly organized.

By 1934, through the efforts of the republican government, 527 students enrolled in various pedagogical correspondence programs were consolidated into the Uzbekistan Correspondence Pedagogical Institute in Tashkent [7.2.].

The Soviet government's objective in establishing correspondence education was to meet the urgent need for qualified personnel in the newly formed Soviet-type incomplete secondary and secondary schools. To this end, these institutions primarily admitted young people who already possessed specialized secondary education and had experience in pedagogical work. Consultation centers for the institute were opened in Tashkent, Samarkand, Fergana, Kokand, Andijan, Bukhara, and New Urgench. One of the main challenges for these correspondence institutions was their inability to provide students with necessary textbooks and methodological materials.

It is worth noting that other higher education institutions in the republic also implemented correspondence programs at the time; however, complete documentation regarding these programs has not survived. Archival documents indicate that as of September 1931, the correspondence department of the Geological Prospecting Institute had 107 students [8.4.]. The scarcity of archival records and an analysis of the available materials suggest that the quality of education in correspondence programs before World War II was extremely low and failed to provide sufficient results.

The primary goal of implementing evening and correspondence education without interrupting employment was to satisfy the need for highly educated specialists in various sectors of the national economy and to cultivate qualified personnel loyal to Bolshevik ideology.

Consequently, the party and government attempted to expand the educational process for those remaining in the workforce.

However, the systems of evening, correspondence, and external higher education did not develop extensively during this period. There were specific reasons for this, primarily the lack of necessary teaching and methodological materials, a shortage of academic buildings, and, most importantly, a deficiency in qualified professorial and teaching staff.

In conclusion, the Soviet government did everything possible to maintain control over the spiritual and psychological state of the people to ensure the ideological alignment of the higher education system. In this process, the government understood that the local intelligentsia played a significant role and that their effective utilization was essential. Moreover, to enhance the social prestige of intellectual labor, the media was used to consistently shape public opinion regarding the intelligentsia. When allocating quotas for university admissions, the government paid special attention to managing the social composition of students. The policy focused on admitting workers, collective farmers (kolkhozniks), civil servants, and their children. For instance, an analysis of the social background of students admitted in the 1938–1939 academic year showed that 45% came from workers' families, 33% from collective farmers, and 22% from civil servants and the intelligentsia [9.22.].

It is evident that increasing the number of people with higher education among the low-income strata was a core ideological task of socialism. The Soviet government maintained its adherence to the doctrine of class struggle within the educational system. A biased attitude toward middle- and high-income strata persisted in the education sector, particularly in higher education.

However, these were only shifts in quantitative indicators. The fundamental issue—the quality and competence of the graduates—remained problematic. To demonstrate the "superiority of socialism," the focus was placed on increasing the number of universities and students rather than on the quality of education or providing thorough training in modern technical sciences [10.28.]. This led to a significant lag behind global standards in training specialists, a wasteful expenditure of funds, and the inefficient utilization of specialists in the workforce.

Analyses show that between 1929 and 1939, evening and correspondence higher education in the Uzbek SSR played a significant role in training personnel in accordance with social and economic goals. However, its effectiveness remained low due to a lack of methodological resources and textbooks, a

shortage of facilities and qualified staff, and poor organization. While some centralized institutions, such as the Tashkent Evening Pedagogical Institute, saw significant growth in student numbers, other cities experienced a decline. Despite support from the party and government, the institutional and methodological resources required to ensure quality were not provided. As a result, despite the expansion and quantitative growth, the low quality of education led to inefficiency and underutilization of specialists in the country's economy.

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