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Education in the Jadidism Movement: The Jadids' Approach to Social Modernization

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Abstract: The Jadid movement emerged among Muslim communities of the Russian Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a reformist response to social and cultural stagnation. At the heart of the movement was a focus on education, which the Jadids viewed as the main tool for fostering literacy, critical thinking, and social modernization. This article examines the educational system of Jadidism, analyzing the historical context that prompted reforms, the principles and methods implemented in Jadid schools, the outcomes of these reforms, and their broader social significance. The study demonstrates that Jadid education played a key role in developing a modern Muslim intelligentsia capable of engaging with the challenges of the modern world.

Keywords: Jadidism, Jadids, education reform, Muslim communities, literacy, social modernization, Central Asia, Russian Empire

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1. Introduction

For centuries, education was a central institution in Muslim societies, shaping religious practice, social norms, and cultural continuity. Traditional madrasas focused mainly on religious instruction, emphasizing memorization of texts and moral training [1]. By the nineteenth century, however, this system increasingly failed to address the needs of society. Students often spent years memorizing religious texts without understanding their content, while subjects such as mathematics, geography, and natural science were largely absent [2].

The integration of Muslim regions into the Russian Empire introduced new political, economic, and cultural challenges [3]. Colonial administration, technological developments, and contact with European societies highlighted the limitations of traditional education. Muslim intellectuals recognized that the old system could not prepare young people for modern social and economic life. In response, the Jadid movement emerged as a reformist project aiming to modernize education and society [4].

The concept of *usul al-jadid* ("new method") originally referred to phonetic literacy instruction but evolved into a comprehensive educational approach. Jadid reformers aimed to combine religious knowledge with secular subjects, modern teaching techniques, and moral education [5]. This article investigates the structure, content, and impact of Jadid education, addressing the question: how did the Jadids' educational system differ from traditional models, and what effect did it have on Muslim society?

Historical Context and Limitations of Traditional Education. Jadid reformers observed that traditional madrasa education relied heavily on rote memorization and limited practical knowledge. Students often spent years reading texts without developing analytical skills or understanding contemporary social realities. Subjects essential for engagement in modern society, such as mathematics, geography, history, and natural sciences, were largely ignored [6].

The stagnation of traditional education contributed to broader social and economic disadvantages. Muslim communities were unable to compete with emerging European-influenced societies in areas such as trade, administration, and technology. This realization became a central motivation for educational reform among the Jadids [7].

Principles of Jadid Education. Jadid education emphasized understanding over memorization. Learning was intended to develop reasoning, analytical thinking, and moral responsibility. Religious education remained central but was complemented with secular knowledge, reflecting the reformers' belief in the compatibility of Islam with science and progress. Schools were designed to serve the broader community by producing individuals capable of contributing to social modernization. Education was seen as a public good, essential for cultural renewal and the development of a competent and morally responsible citizenry [8].

2. Methodology

This study applies a qualitative historical research approach to examine the educational reforms introduced by the Jadid movement and their role in social modernization in Muslim communities of the Russian Empire. The research is based on the analysis of historical documents, scholarly literature, and archival sources related to the development of Jadid educational reforms [9].

Several research methods were used in this study. First, the historical analysis method was applied to investigate the emergence of the Jadid movement and the socio-political conditions that encouraged educational reforms in Central Asia and other Muslim regions of the Russian Empire. This method made it possible to understand the historical context in which Jadid education developed and spread [10].

Second, a comparative analysis was conducted to examine the differences between the traditional madrasa educational system and the educational model introduced by Jadid reformers. Special attention was given to differences in curriculum structure, teaching methods, and the overall goals of the educational process [11].

Third, a content analysis method was used to examine educational materials, textbooks, and reformist writings produced by Jadid intellectuals. This analysis helped identify the key principles of Jadid pedagogy, including the use of phonetic literacy instruction, the integration of secular subjects into the curriculum, and the emphasis on developing analytical thinking among students [12].

Finally, the study involved an interpretive analysis of modern academic works devoted to the history of Jadidism and educational reform in Central Asia. The synthesis of these sources allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the educational ideas of the Jadids and their impact on social modernization [13].

Curriculum Reform. The curriculum of Jadid schools represented a significant departure from traditional models. In addition to religious instruction, schools taught reading and writing using phonetic methods, arithmetic, geography, history, and natural science. Instruction increasingly took place in local languages, while Arabic remained part of religious education.

This approach improved accessibility, comprehension, and practical knowledge, preparing students to engage with both their cultural heritage and contemporary society [14].

Teaching Methods and Organization. Jadid schools introduced structured classroom settings, printed textbooks, lesson plans, and the use of blackboards. Teachers encouraged comprehension and discussion rather than rote repetition. These innovations shortened the time required for basic literacy and made education more engaging for students.

The focus on effective teaching methods, organized classrooms, and trained teachers marked a substantial modernization of the educational process.

Formation of a Modern Intelligentsia. Graduates of Jadid schools often became teachers, writers, journalists, and social activists. By spreading reformist ideas, they contributed to cultural and social modernization. The new educational system thus created a socially aware, critically thinking elite capable of leading community development [15].

3. Results

The results of the study show that the educational reforms introduced by the Jadid movement significantly transformed the traditional educational system in Muslim communities of the Russian Empire. One of the most important outcomes of Jadid reform was the introduction of a new phonetic method of teaching reading and writing. This approach allowed students to achieve literacy more quickly than under the traditional madrasa system, where the learning process was often based on long-term memorization of texts.

Another significant result of the reform was the expansion of the curriculum in Jadid schools. In addition to religious education, students were taught subjects such as mathematics, geography, history, and natural sciences. The inclusion of these subjects provided students with practical knowledge and prepared them for participation in modern social and economic life.

The research also indicates that Jadid schools introduced more effective teaching methods and classroom organization. The use of printed textbooks, blackboards, structured lessons, and interactive learning methods improved the quality of education and made the learning process more engaging for students. Teachers encouraged understanding and discussion rather than simple memorization of information.

Furthermore, Jadid education contributed to the emergence of a new intellectual elite in Muslim societies. Graduates of Jadid schools often became teachers, journalists, writers, and social activists. Through their professional and cultural activities, they played an important role in spreading reformist ideas and promoting social and cultural modernization.

Overall, the results demonstrate that the educational reforms of the Jadid movement significantly increased literacy levels, broadened intellectual horizons, and helped form a socially active generation capable of addressing the challenges of modernization.

4. Discussion

Jadid education was a systemic reform, challenging traditional pedagogical methods and redefining the social purpose of schooling. Schools became spaces not only for knowledge transmission but also for cultivating civic awareness, intellectual independence, and social responsibility.

Despite opposition from conservative religious authorities and suspicion from colonial administrations, Jadid schools expanded in urban areas and influenced cultural life beyond education. By integrating religious and secular knowledge, the Jadids provided a model for modern Muslim identity that preserved tradition while fostering engagement with contemporary society.

The success of Jadid schools highlights the transformative potential of education when aligned with social reform. It also illustrates the challenges of balancing cultural preservation with modernization in societies undergoing rapid change.

5. Conclusion

The Jadids' educational system played a pivotal role in modernizing Muslim communities in the Russian Empire. Through curriculum expansion, modern teaching methods, and a focus on understanding and critical thinking, Jadid reformers transformed traditional education into a tool for social development. The movement created a new intelligentsia capable of engaging with modern social, political, and cultural challenges, demonstrating the power of education as a driver of societal change.

The educational system of Jadidism stands as a historical example of how reform-oriented education can foster intellectual, social, and cultural modernization while remaining rooted in tradition.

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