

# **Primary Public Education in the Russian Empire: The Example of Kazan Province**

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**ABSTRACT** This work is devoted to the problems of organizing the work of elementary schools in Kazan Province in the second half of the 19th century - 1917. The tasks posed in the article are as follows: analyzing government policy in the field of public education from the second half of the 19th to 1917, identifying features of activities of public education and local self-government in managing primary education institutions; studying elementary school staff members and their training system, and identifying features of curricula and textbooks for elementary school. A system-structural approach and dialectic, general, historical, and logical methods were further used, which made it possible to identify essential features in formulation of primary public education in the late Imperial period. The method of historical continuity also made it possible to shed light on development of educational system in historical retrospective. Consideration of the problem both at all-Russian and regional levels correspondingly revealed general and special difficulties and contradictions in primary education. The practical application of this article was to focus the attention of professional community of historians and teachers on achievements of domestic pedagogical thoughts, integrated applications of specific developments, and recommendations developed by domestic teachers.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In 1864, the “Regulation on Primary Public Schools” was approved, which had not taken account of the introduction of universal education. The main reason for its denial was seen in peasants’ poverty. Caring for public education also became as one of the most important areas of the county (Regulation on Provincial and County Institutions). The “Regulation on Primary Public Schools” correspondingly established that primary educational institutions could be opened up by all governmental departments, urban and rural societies, counties, as well as private individuals; and that all children could study in them, regardless of their social status, religion, or nationality. But, the most important aspect of the “Regulation on Primary Public Schools” was the introduction of a new management system for primary schools. Collegial College Councils were created with the participation of representatives of local self-government - Provincial and County College Councils. Members of the Academic District of the Ministry of Public Education and the Ministry of the Interior, the Diocesan Department, as well as county and city self-government bodies met in these Councils and the trustee of the educational district could be also present at the Provincial College Council (the Regulations on Primary Public Schools). According to the “Regulation on Primary Public Schools”; the main goal of the primary public schools was expressed in “establishment of religious and moral concepts among people as well as dissemination of initial useful information and the curriculum included the following subjects; God’s law (i.e. a brief catechism and sacred history), reading from books of civil and church press, letters, and four arithmetic operations and church singing (the Regulations on Primary Public Schools). Thus, the main concern of primary schools was religious and moral education and teaching literacy. Since 1865, a large number of county schools began to open up in all the provinces of the Russian Empire, including in Kazan. Cities for some time remained behind the countryside in the field of public education, as counties were endowed with greater opportunities, in contrast to urban self-government bodies. But still, some shifts occurred in Kazan; for example, the first school for girls was opened in 1865, and two more elementary schools were opened up in 1866 (Alekseev 1890); the following year, female elementary schools were opened in Sviyazhsk and Tetyushi (Department of Rare Manuscripts and Books of the Scientific Library of Kazan Federal University, Storage Unit 711/1:24.).

In 1868 in Mamadysh, the county government opened a female school, and girls from suburban villages studied there (13). On April 22, 1868, tests for teacher positions were introduced. The teacher titles created by this document also lasted until 1917. A peculiar teacher’s Rank Report

looked like this; teachers of a gymnasium and prof. gymnasium, teachers of district schools (since 1872, with the transformation of district schools into urban schools - teachers of urban primary schools), home teachers, primary school teachers, teachers of technical drawing and drawing in gymnasiums and district schools, and teachers of foreign schools since 1874.

## **METHODS**

The research methods determined the following principles of historical knowledge; historicism, scientific objectivity, comparison, as well as complexity and systematicity. General scientific methods also included analysis, synthesis, comparison, induction, and deduction which made it possible to see the development of events in dynamics. The historical genetic method, referred to as special historical method, helped in considering the development of events in the region in comparison with all-Russian trends. General historical and logical methods further allowed for building the created methodology in its continuity and sequence with internal logical connections between certain elements. The historical-typological approach correspondingly allowed for systematizing the most important indicators of the primary education system regarding the number of elementary schools in Kazan Province, composition of teachers and students, as well as systematized educational technologies.

## **RESULTS**

Primary education in the Russian Empire was presented in the form of a county school, a parochial school, and a higher elementary one. The parochial school acted as an addition to the county school, opened on the basis of the church and subordinate to the Synod. Funding in both parochial and county schools was carried out according to the principle of self-government.

In district schools, there were two forms of financing i.e. treasury and urban community. County schools were also opened up in rural areas and managed by counties. County schools were also called schools. Moreover, higher primary schools spread in small towns. City schools in the Russian Empire were similarly divided into one-, two-, three-, and four-year classes. The academic year in two-year schools lasted 4 years and it lasted 6 years in three-year schools (State Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan, Fund 160, Inventory 1, Case 1352.). At the request of the county, urban societies, estates or private individuals, and city schools held at their expense could be also established in five or six classes.

Although, until the 1870s, legislative instruments and instructions were the main instrument of state political activity, formation and development of bodies of the Ministry of Public Education on the ground led the staff of the directorate of public schools to become conductors of public education policy. The state also limited the powers of cities and counties only to primary education, thereby preventing the growing role of local authorities in the development of public education. Within the Kazan educational district, it was precisely during this period that Kazan teacher's seminary, Tatar teacher's school, and Kazan teacher's institute were opened (State Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan, 1949), which occupied their own niches. The Kazan teacher's seminary trained teachers for missionary schools for the baptized non-Russian population of the region and the Tatar teacher's school was doing it for rural and urban schools wherein the Tatar population was mainly trained. The Kazan teacher's institute was also conceived as a training center for teachers of urban and district schools (Iskhakova, 1999). Teacher's institutes were thus opened according to the "Regulation on Teacher Institutes" dated May 31, 1872, in seven educational districts, including the Kazan educational district. The Kazan teacher's institute was opened on October 24, 1876, and Paramonov who had recently been sent to Germany to study the training of teachers for city schools, was appointed as its principal.

By 1915, three male and one mixed types of higher elementary schools were operating in Kazan (State Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan, 1949). At higher elementary schools, teacher training courses were also opened for training teachers for these educational institutions (On Higher Elementary Schools).

In 1916, at 5 higher elementary schools out of 21 cases throughout the Kazan Province, three-year teacher training courses were active, including those in Kozmodemyansky, Mamadyshsky, Tetyushsky, Tsarevskosokhaysky, and Cheboksary districts .

There were no pedagogical courses at four Kazan higher elementary schools, perhaps due to the fact that a teacher institute had been operating in Kazan since 1876. The opening of teacher training courses at higher elementary schools in district towns also facilitated the fate of those who wished to receive teacher education within their county without moving to Kazan. In 1917, only 21 higher primary schools were opened and transformed in Kazan Province, including 8 mixed and 13 male ones. As for the control over the activities of primary schools, the Director of the public schools of the Kazan Province owned leading elementary public schools. He, at least once a year, attended each of the city and county schools and had an idea of each teacher.

Sometimes, according to his will, staff changes and dismissals could take place. He also closely followed financial issues of the content of the educational process (Krapotkina 2016). Assistant directors of public schools - inspectors - had been also present in every county of Kazan Province since the 1890s. The duties of the inspector included both monitoring educational process and solving problems of strengthening material bases and financial activities of primary educational institutions subordinate to him, not only ministerial, but also those that were under the jurisdiction of local authorities. Their activities were of the nature of current everyday control (usually, the inspector's office was located in the school building). Since the ministry did not finance elementary schools, the inspector focused on the control of the educational process - he often demanded a change of teachers from the city government, purchase of some textbooks and visual aids, and improvement of sanitary conditions of schools (State Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan, Fund 160, List 1, Cases 503-504, 530, 657, 808, 832, 940).

In accordance with the "Regulation on Primary Public Schools" of 1874 in 1884, the "Rules on Parochial Schools" were approved (Rules on Parochial Schools). A wide network of such educational institutions thus developed in the form of elementary secular schools by their status. For the management of parochial schools within the Synod, a special church educational institution was created (Rules on Parochial Schools).

The "Rules on Parochial Schools" of 1884 were later replaced by the "Regulation on Church Schools of the Office of the Orthodox Confession" of April 1, 1902. In elementary and teacher schools, the duration of education was also increased to 3 and 6 years, respectively (Regulation on Church Schools of the Department of the Orthodox Confession of April 1, 1904).

Parochial schools were then considered, in fact, as an instrument of struggle against a public school supported by counties. County schools then turned out to be a relatively advanced school, which is why they were constantly attacked by the state. Parochial schools also opened in Kazan and in other cities of Kazan Province. But, there was no struggle between the already existing city schools and parochial ones. The opening of the primary schools of the Synod department was also greeted by the City Council with approval as a measure to enhance public education in the city. Parochial schools opened up in areas where there were no city schools and the number of children was more than places in schools.

Moreover, the state made some concessions such as annual allocations for the needs of primary education in view of the introduction of universal education, creation of a school building fund,

and adoption of “Regulation on Higher Primary Schools”. Higher primary schools were a superstructure over primary education, as a kind of transition to secondary schools. Those who graduated from grades 1 and 2 of education could enter grades 2 and 3 of secondary school (but for admission to grade 3, they required passing an exam in languages, which often served as an obstacle to further continuing education in secondary school). Nevertheless, higher elementary schools had a wider curriculum, almost similar to the set of subjects in secondary schools and there was only the study of foreign and ancient languages. With the new type of primary schools, there were additional classes or courses such as pedagogical, handicraft, telegraph and postal services, etc. Thus, the lower and the middle layers of the population had the opportunity to receive not only primary education, but also vocational training.

Summarizing all of the above issues, it can be concluded that during the period under review, namely from the 60s of 19th century and 1917, the elementary school turned into an important component of the life of people and became accessible to children of all social layers of population.

The profession of an elementary school teacher has also become widespread. Primary public schools have developed into an important factor in the formation of the intellectual potential of population. The joint training of children of noblemen, merchants, citizens, and people from the countryside, as well as children of different nationalities and religions have also contributed to overcoming estate, religious, and national prejudices.

The most important questions of the history of elementary schools of various types are covered in the works of Ososkova (1982) and in the joint work of Konstantinova and Struminsky (1902). Krasovitskaya monograph for the first time compared the imperial and Soviet projects of modernization of the Russian educational space and mechanisms of their implementation by governing structures. Especially highlighted is the confrontation between the elites who proposed their projects to the Russian people; distinguished from each other by their languages, religions, and traditions (Krasovitskaya, 2011).

The work of Panachina (1986) and Kuzmina (1975) in an article by Okushova (2010) also considered the main approaches to training for a rural school and the work of the doctor of pedagogical sciences, Iskhakova (1999), most fully reflected the issues of teacher education in the post-reform Kazan Province.

The Krasovitskaya monograph was devoted to questions regarding structure and activity of governing bodies of public education system (Krapotkina 2016). The article of the Russian contemporary researcher, Ovsyannikova, examining the public education system of the Russian Empire in the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century as well as types of educational institutions and their purposes analyzing the normative acts regulating their activities and management procedures was also interesting. In the works of English-speaking authors, the theme of primary public education in the second half of the 19th century - 1917 - a complex of issues relating to socioeconomic development of the Russian Empire, dynamics of social structure of post-reform society, as well as continuation of modernization processes in public education system already in the post-revolutionary period had been studied (Beer 2002).

## **DISCUSSION**

The identification of the features of the work of the elementary schools of the Kazan Province in the post-reform period is of particular relevance in connection with the ability to use the identified materials for a detailed reconstruction of everyday life of the Russian society during the period of large-scale transformation processes at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries. The study of the functioning of educational institutions in the conditions of revolutions and the First World War also allows for identifying the main vectors of development of state and regional educational policies in order to evaluate and characterize the scale of the transformation processes unfolding in the region during the highlighted period.

## **CONCLUSION**

The topic of this study is relevant in that a specific regional aspect of the functioning of the primary public school in the second half of the 19th century is 1917; which has not been yet sufficiently studied. In addition, to date, the issue of developing the system of primary public schools has not received full coverage in Russian and foreign historiography and has not become the object of special research.

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