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The System of Public Education in Penza Governorate in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Part 1

Anvar M. Mamadaliev ^{a, b, *}, Valentina S. Nikitina ^c, Natalia V. Svechnikova ^d,
Irina Yu. Cherkasova ^a

^a Cherkas Global University, Washington, USA

^b Volgograd State University, Volgograd, Russian Federation

^c Peoples Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Moscow, Russian Federation

^d Plekhanov Russian University of Economics, Moscow, Russian Federation

Abstract

This set of articles explores the development of the education system in Penza Governorate, a region in the Russian Empire, in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries (through to 1917).

The present paper examines the prerevolutionary, Soviet, and contemporary historiography and relevant sources for the study of the topic. It employs a set of traditional and nontraditional historical and general research methods. It provides an outline of the region's economic, social, political, and geographical characteristics. It provides a quantitative and qualitative insight into the state of the system of public education in the region as of 1854.

A conclusion was drawn that the source base on the subject, especially its segment dealing with the first half of the 19th century, is quite scant. A highly valuable source for statistics on the subject is the so-called "memorandum books". There is a lack of fundamental research on the subject too.

The authors' conclusion is that by the mid-1850s Penza Governorate had an underdeveloped education system – even vis-à-vis the then-newly incorporated areas of the Caucasus. The governorate had 28 educational institutions. That is, the region had an average of about 3,000 urban residents per educational institution. The low level of development of the education sector in Penza Governorate at the time must have been associated with the region's relative remoteness and vastness, its complex climatic conditions, and the prevalence there of traditional crafts, which did not require literacy.

* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: anvarm@mail.ru (A.M. Mamadaliev)

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1. Introduction

Penza Governorate was a relatively small administrative territorial unit situated in the heart of the Russian Empire. Primarily focused on arable farming, it had a population of 1.5 million as of 1897. As Penza Governorate the area existed between 1796 and 1797 and later between 1801 and 1928. Its capital was Penza.

This work will examine the development of the system of public education in Penza Governorate, including in comparison with some of the other regions of the Russian Empire.

The present paper, which kicks the series off, analyzes the source base for the study and provides a historiographical review of the topic under review, offers a general insight into the level of socioeconomic development in Penza Governorate, and furnishes statistics on schools and students in the region as of 1854.

2. Materials and methods

The primary source employed in this study is the Memorandum Books for Penza Governorate, which was an annual publication that contained detailed information on the activity of educational institutions in the region (e.g., [Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1854](#)). This particular source will be used throughout the series to analyze the system of public education in Penza Governorate.

The Memorandum Books may have been the first periodical in Penza Governorate. While it certainly did not measure up to *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniya*, it did include fairly detailed information on activity within the region's education sector. More than 20 issues of the Memorandum Books were released, the first in 1854 and the last in 1912.

The Books were uniform in structure. They listed all major gubernia and uyezd public authorities, contained reference information on various business sectors, and provided statistics about most areas of public life, which is what makes this source particularly valuable.

Valuable, if somewhat succinct, information is available from a number of sources of a reference nature, including the copious Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedic Dictionary ([Brokgauz–Efron, 1896](#)) and the following regional reference sources: I.F. Kuz'min's 'Penza Governorate (A Geographical Description and Historical Data)' ([Kuz'min, 1895](#)), official directories for Penza Governorate (e.g., [Adres-kalendar', 1865](#)), and reference books of Penza Governorate (e.g., [Spravochnaya kniga, 1893](#)).

Some information is available from reports by Penza functionaries (e.g., 'Report of the Penza Gubernia Administration on the Participation of the Penza Gubernia Zemstvo in the Development of Public Education' ([Doklad gubernskoi upravly, 1900](#))).

The development of education in the governorate has been explored by articles published in a number of Russian journals, including *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniya* (e.g., [ЖМНП, 1843](#)), *Narodnoe Obrazovanie* (e.g., [HO, 1898](#); [HO, 1900](#)), *Narodnaya Shkola* (e.g., [HIII, 1869](#)), *Obrazovanie* (e.g., [Obrazovanie, 1892](#); [Obrazovanie, 1899](#); [Obrazovanie, 1908](#); [Obrazovanie, 1909](#)), *Pedagogichesky Listok* (e.g., [PL, 1873](#); [PL, 1897](#)), and *Pedagogichesky Sbornik* (e.g., [PS, 1872](#); [PS, 1890](#)).

Valuable information is also available from some of the period's newspapers, both those published in Penza Governorate (e.g., [PGV, 1844](#); [PGV, 1869](#); [PGV, 1871](#)) and those published in adjacent governorates (e.g., [NGV, 1865](#)).

Worthy of separate mention are relevant regulations governing the operation of educational institutions in the region, as well as directories of such regulations. This most notably includes the Regulation on Female Schools under the Purview of the Ministry of Public Education ([Polozhenie o zhenskikh uchilishchakh, 1861](#)), 'A Digest of Ordinances of the Penza Gubernia Zemstvo Assembly (1865–1911)' ([Postanovleniya Penzenskogo..., 1911](#)), a set of collections of ordinances by the Ministry of Public Education (e.g., [Postanovleniya MNP, 1865](#); [Postanovleniya MNP, 1876](#); [Postanovleniya MNP, 1877](#)), and 'A Collection of Ordinances and Directives on Gymnasiums and Progymnasiums under the Purview of the Ministry of Public Education' ([Postanovleniya po gimnaziyam, 1874](#)). Another source definitely worthy of mention is 'The Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire' ([PSZRI, 1884](#)).

The study employed a set of traditional and nontraditional historical and general research methods.

The traditional research methods employed in this study include the historical-systemic method (to explore the system of public education in Penza Governorate through the prism of the political, social, demographic, and economic state of affairs in the region), the historical-comparative method (both in terms of the chronological aspect, i.e. to compare the state of the region's education system at the lower and upper chronological boundaries, and in terms of the territorial-geographical aspect, i.e. to compare the region's education system with that of other regions with similar socioeconomic development), the historical-typological method (the region's educational institutions were classified by type), and the historical-genetic method (to determine the correlation between the development of the education system in Penza Governorate and regulatory activity by the government).

The nontraditional method employed in this study is the historical-statistical method (to conduct quantitative analysis of educational institutions in the region and students at them). Wide use was made of the following general research methods: synthetic analysis, analysis of sources and the literature (bibliographical analysis), and systems analysis.

The integrated use of the above methods helped gain an objective and comprehensive insight into the development of the system of public education in Penza Governorate in the period between the 19th and early 20th centuries.

3. Discussion

Overall, there is a paucity of research regarding the development of the education system in Penza Governorate. Considering that the present paper kicks off a series of three articles on the topic, more detailed attention will be given to the historiography thereof.

In terms of the prerevolutionary historiography, of particular interest is the 81-page work 'An Essay on Primary Education in Penza Governorate Based on Data for the 1899–1900 School Year', published by the Penza Gubernia Zemstvo in 1903, which contains detailed and highly valuable statistical data on the activity of primary educational institutions in Penza Governorate at the turn of the century (Ocherk, 1903).

An analysis of statistics on public education in European Russia, which Penza Governorate was part of, was conducted by scholar A.V. Dubrovskii (Dubrovskii, 1879).

Between the first two decades of the 20th century, scholar N.F. Ezerskii explored the characteristics of interaction between the zemstvo and public schools (Ezerskii, 1910), the characteristics of the educational process (Ezerskii, 1912), and didactic content in public schools in the region (Ezerskii, 1913).

Some information is also available from research on the history of particular educational institutions (e.g., 'A Historical Essay on Penza's First Gymnasium (1804–1871)' by P.P. Zelenetskii (Zelenetskii, 1889)).

Issues related to interaction between parochial schools and the local education administration were explored in an article by K.N. Korol'kov published in the journal *Penzenskii Eparhial'nye Vedomosti* (Korol'kov, 1898).

The Soviet historiography contains several noteworthy works covering the topic.

Research on the education system in Penza Governorate remains episodic and fragmentary. We shall start with the integrated fundamental works exploring the education system in the Russian Empire as a whole.

A collection of essays by V.Z. Smirnov provides an in-depth analysis of the education system in imperial Russia and explores its breakthrough achievements (Smirnov, 1963). A monograph by I.M. Bogdanov investigates issues related to education and literacy in prerevolutionary Russia (Bogdanov, 1964). A work by E.D. Dneprov explores the Soviet historiography related to the development of pedagogy prior to the 1917 Revolutions (Dneprov, 1979).

Also of note are the following collections of essays on the history and development of pedagogy: 'Essays on the History of the Penza Region (Spanning the Period from the Earliest Times to the Late 19th Century)' (Ocherki, 1973), 'Essays on the History of the Education and Pedagogical Thought in the Nations of the USSR (Spanning the Second Half of the 19th Century)' (Ocherki, 1976), and 'Essays on the History of the Education and Pedagogical Thought in the Nations of the USSR (Spanning the Period from the Late 19th to Early 20th Centuries)' (Ocherki, 1991). These are

summarizing works and can be of interest only in terms of gaining a general idea of the development of the education system in Penza Governorate, so they make no pretense to providing a comprehensive treatment of the subject.

As regards relevant articles in periodicals and nonperiodicals, of particular interest is a paper by A.G. Rashin exploring the key issues with literacy and measures to resolve them within Russia's public education sector in the period between the 19th and early 20th centuries (Rashin, 1951). Scholar V.Z. Smirnov researched the measures to maintain student discipline in gymnasiums and progymnasiums in prerevolutionary Russia (Smirnov, 1956).

The contemporary historiography contains very few fundamental works on the topic.

Of particular note is the fundamental work 'Essays on the History of Public Education in the Penza Region' (Ocherki, 1997). Produced by a team of researchers under the editorship of V.I. Nikulin, it is a profound work that relies on a vast source base, one that overall meets the objective of providing a comprehensive and objective analysis of the system of public education in the Penza region. Yet certain issues, like those related to its state in the prerevolutionary period, could have been explored in that work in more depth.

Some general information on the topic is available from the integrated collective monograph 'The Penza Region in the History and Culture of Russia', produced under the editorship of O.A. Sukhova (Penzenskii krai, 2014). Public education in the region is discussed in the above work in Item 8, 'Public Education in Penza Governorate in the Period between the Second Half of the 19th and Early 20th Centuries', of Section 3, 'Penza Governorate in the Post-Reform Period'. This section comprises just a few pages, so the information provided therein is more of a fact-finding nature.

Likewise, the collection 'A Heritage: The Culture of the Penza Region in Documents of an Era and Letters and Memoirs from Contemporaries' provides a fairly brief and generalized account of the education system in Penza Governorate (Nasledie, 1994).

The number of publications in the literature that examine the topic is relatively small too. However, they can provide an insight into a fairly narrow spectrum of issues, with reliance on a vast source base.

In particular, scholar N.N. Chetvertkova explores the system of public education in Penza Governorate in the period 1900–1905 based on materials from the newspaper The Penza Governorate Gazette to provide an insight into the reasons behind growth in the numbers of educational institutions and students in the region in that period and investigate issues related to material support for educational institutions there. The author also devotes some attention to the handling of staffing issues and the issue of finding a sponsor by the local education administration (Chetvertkova, 2007).

There are several works that examine the development of female education in Penza Governorate. For instance, a work by V.N. Parshina analyzes Russia's female vocational education sector in the period between the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The scholar examines relevant initiatives brought forward by the general public at the time. The work concludes that "the dynamics of this process [the development of female education in Penza Governorate] were dependent directly on the level of socioeconomic development in the country" (Parshina, 2008: 124). The author draws attention to the obvious mismatch between the declared need for vocational female education and the practical activity of educational institutions in the region, which took very little account of the real needs of society (Parshina, 2008). The same scholar also shares the findings from a structural analysis of educational processes in female primary educational institutions in Penza Governorate in the period between the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries (Parshina, 2010). The above works contain rich archival material gleaned from the State Archive of Penza Oblast.

The issue of female education in Penza Governorate is explored in more depth in a candidate's dissertation by the abovementioned scholar, 'The Making of the System of Female Education in Russia in the Period between the Second Half of the 19th and Early 20th Centuries: The Case of Penza Governorate' (Parshina, 2007).

The issue of the development of female education in Penza Governorate has also been explored in an integrated fashion by scholars O. Makarkina and N.I. Polosin (Makarkina, Polosin, 1998).

A candidate's dissertation by O.V. Dunaeva provides an insight into the development of special education in the second half of the 19th century in Russia's provincial cities through the example of Penza (Dunaeva, 1999a). Of interest in the context of the research reported in the present paper is also an article by the above scholar focused on the ethnic, estate, and religious composition of the student body in the above sector (Dunaeva, 1999b).

Of particular interest are the dissertations by L.D. Goshulyak focused on the history of pedagogy. The scholar's candidate's dissertation explores the development of the "zemstvo concept of public education (through the example of Penza Governorate) in the period between the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries (Goshulyak, 1995). The scholar's doctoral dissertation investigates the theory and practice of the development of the education system in Penza Governorate in the same period (Goshulyak, 2002).

A useful insight into the region's system of secondary education is provided in a candidate's dissertation by O.A. Kostyukova, 'The Making and Development of Gymnasium Education in Russian Governorates in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries: The Case of Gymnasiums in Penza Governorate', which provides a fairly in-depth analysis of the development of the region's gymnasium education sector from the time of its foundation in the governorate (1804) to the February Revolution of 1917 (Kostyukova, 2006).

For the purposes of comparative historical analysis, use was made of a number of articles on other governorates and regions of the Russian Empire (e.g., Cherkasov, 2011; Magsumov et al., 2018; Mamadaliev et al., 2020a; Mamadaliev et al., 2020b; Mamadaliev et al., 2020c; Mamadaliev et al., 2020d; Molchanova et al., 2019; Molchanova et al., 2019a; Molchanova et al., 2020; Natolochnaya et al., 2016; Shevchenko et al., 2016).

In general, while the analysis of the system of public education in Penza Governorate conducted so far is quite in-depth, there still remain a few areas that need further exploration. The present series of articles aims to fill these gaps.

4. Results

The study's geographical scope is restricted to a region that existed as Penza Governorate between 1796 and 1797 and later from 1801 to 1928.

Information on the region's education system in the late 18th and first half of the 19th centuries is quite fragmentary. A proper source base on the subject began to form only in the 1840s, with the launch of a number of periodicals, including the Memorandum Books.

Therefore, the chronological scope of this work (as a series of articles) is somewhat narrower than the scope of the governorate's existence. It is 1854–1917. The present paper is an introductory one and examines the state of the region's education system as of 1854.

Below is an outline of the economic and social state of affairs in Penza Governorate at the time.

According to the Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedic Dictionary, Penza Governorate had "borders with Tambov Governorate to the west, Saratov Governorate to the south, Simbirsk Governorate to the east, and Nizhny Novgorod Governorate to the north. The area has a rolling surface, its landscape shaped by gentle hills and deep river valleys. These valleys get filled with river water in springtime" (Brokgauz-Efron, 1896: 134). The region's economy was grounded in arable farming (cultivation of wheat, rye, barley, oats, buckwheat, potatoes, hemp, and some tobacco; operation of a three-field system, a fairly backward system of field husbandry), horticulture (apples and cherries), and livestock farming (horse breeding, pig farming, sheep farming, and beef cattle farming). A major role in the region's economy was played by its textile industry (mainly linen fabrics). The region produced hemp fabric and manufactured simple agricultural implements and machinery. It had approximately 2,500 factories and plants, with a combined workforce of around 14,000.

The region had a population of around 1.5 million, with the overwhelming majority of its residents (approx. 1.4 million) being Orthodox Christians, followed by a very long margin by Muslims (approx. 70,000). A relatively large group in this respect was constituted by Schismatics (over 22,000), distinguished by the government from Orthodox Christian citizens. In terms of social estate composition, the overwhelming majority of the population were peasants (approx. 1.3 million), followed by a very long margin by members of the "military estates" (approx. 84,000), and then members of the petit bourgeois (over 65,000). The majority of the population lived in

villages. In terms of ethnic composition, the overwhelming majority of the population were ethnic Russians (over 85%), followed by Mordvins (aboriginals) and Tatars ([Perepis'..., 1997](#)).

Below is the characterization of education system in Penza Governorate as of 1896 provided by the Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedic Dictionary ([Brokgauz-Efron, 1896: 138-139](#)).

The governorate had 882 educational institutions, with a combined enrollment of 44,500 students. Its secondary education sector was represented by the following:

- 2 male gymnasiums;
- 1 female gymnasium and 2 female progymnasiums;
- 1 diocesan female school;
- 1 ecclesiastical seminary and 3 ecclesiastical schools;
- 1 real school;
- 1 teacher's seminary;
- 1 surveyor's school and 1 gardening school ([Brokgauz-Efron, 1896: 138](#)).

The region's secondary educational institutions had a combined enrollment of 2,235 (1,407 males and 828 females).

Its lower and primary educational institutions included the following:

- special schools (1 technical railroad school, 1 rural midwifery school, 1 feldsher school, 2 agricultural schools, forest science programs at two forest districts, and 1 Tatishchev female trades school);

- monastery schools (6 schools for girls only and 3 schools for both boys and girls, with a combined enrollment of 192);

- parochial schools (223, with a combined enrollment of 8,970 (7,942 males and 1,028 females));

- grammar schools (157, with a combined enrollment of 3,664 (3,301 males and 363 females));

- urban schools (6 (as of 1872));

- uyezd schools (4);

- two-grade parish schools (4);

- parish schools for boys (21);

- parish schools for girls (13);

- parish schools for both boys and girls (3; starting with the urban ones, the above schools had a combined enrollment of 6,612);

- two-grade schools under the purview of the Ministry of Public Education in the countryside (7, with a combined enrollment of 887);

- one-grade schools under the purview of the Ministry of Public Education (11, with a combined enrollment of 729);

- zemstvo schools for boys (5, with a combined enrollment of 332);

- zemstvo schools for girls (5, with a combined enrollment of 332);

- zemstvo schools for both boys and girls (5, with a combined enrollment of 328) ([Brokgauz-Efron, 1896: 138-139](#)).

The region also had mono-ethnic ministerial schools for Mordvins and Tatars. According to the encyclopedia, "some schools have lately had gardens, vegetable patches, and apiaries organized at them. The gubernia zemstvo has provided funding for the running of such apiaries. Craft and handiwork classes are currently offered at a number of schools in the region" ([Brokgauz-Efron, 1896: 139](#)).

Special attention in the Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopaedic Dictionary is given to library services in the region. Based on data from it, as of 1896 the region had "15 libraries, 23 book stores and shops, 7 print shops (one of these incorporating a lithographic shop and a type foundry), 1 lithographic shop, and 3 photographer's studios. Among the region's uyezd cities, the following had libraries in them: Krasnoslobodsk, Mokshan, Nizhny Lomov, and Saransk. There is a book warehouse in Penza, set up by the gubernia zemstvo, and funding has been provided for the operation of reading-halls. The government has provided 5,784 rubles for the female gymnasium, 3,000 rubles for the real school, 2,000 rubles for the male gymnasium, 500 rubles toward the two Count Speransky scholarships, and 1,100 rubles toward the pedagogical program. A special item of expenditure is the funding of the zemstvo scholarships at Kharkov University and Penza's First

Gymnasium. The zemstvo allocated for the schools 180 rubles in 1867, 12,883 rubles in 1869, and 118,392 rubles in 1889” (Brokgauz–Efron, 1896: 139).

The primary source used in this study, the Memorandum Books for Penza Governorate, was published by the Penza Gubernia Statistics Committee in the region’s capital, Penza.

The region’s education system is covered in several sections (each item covered in a separate section), with the following explored in depth: a noble institute, a gubernia gymnasium, an uyezd school, an institute for noble maidens, and a private school. The Memorandum Book lists information on staff at these schools such as their positions, titles, and full names (Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1854: 25-28). Information of this kind is not available on staff at the rest of educational institutions in the region.

A consolidated table at the end of the Memorandum Book provides the number of educational institutions in each city, dividing them into ecclesiastical and secular, and the number of students at them (Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1854: 117). Table 1 displays these data.

Table 1. Numbers of Educational Institutions and Students at Them in the Cities of Penza Governorate (Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1854: 117).

City	Educational institutions		Number of students		
	Ecclesiastical	Secular	At the region’s ecclesiastical schools	At the region’s secular schools	
			Males	Males	Females
Penza	1	4	764	607	36
Saransk	0	2	0	71	0
Insar	0	1	0	22	3
Krasnoslobodsk	1	2	224	154	0
Narovchat	0	3	0	91	4
Nizhny Lomov	1	2	209	133	11
Kerensk	0	0	0	0	0
Chembar	0	2	0	84	0
Mokshan	0	2	0	47	0
Gorodishche	0	2	0	62	0
Troitsk	0	1	0	20	0
Shishkeyev	0	1	0	60	0
Verkhny Lomov	0	1	0	105	6
Total	3	25	1,197	1,456	60

Overall, as of 1854 the governorate had 28 educational institutions, with a combined enrollment of 2,713 students, with the overwhelming majority of these being males (2,653 (97.7%) – versus 60 females (2.3%)). The situation in Penza Governorate was similar to that across the Caucasus, where, as suggested by a number of researchers (e.g., Cherkasov, 2011; Magsumov et al., 2018; Mamadaliev et al., 2020a; Mamadaliev et al., 2020b; Mamadaliev et al., 2020c; Mamadaliev et al., 2020d; Molchanova et al., 2019; Molchanova et al., 2019a; Molchanova et al., 2020; Natolochnaya et al., 2016; Shevchenko et al., 2016), this was due to the belief that women did not need education, as theirs was the role of housewife in the traditional family. As of 1854, the region’s cities had a combined population of 82,206 (Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1854: 117). That is, students accounted for just about 3.4% of the population, with there being 2,936 residents per educational institution, which is a low figure even vis-à-vis the then-newly incorporated areas of the Caucasus (see the above publications). This backwardness must have been associated with the region’s relative remoteness and vastness and its tough climatic conditions, with its population having to depend on physical labor to make a living and thus having no time for a “luxury” like education. It is also worth remembering that it was a period when serfdom was still in place in the Russian Empire, with landowners being hardly interested in peasants being literate.

5. Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn from the insights gained from this study:

1. There are a relatively low number of sources on the education system in Penza Governorate available to the public at this time, which especially is the case with those covering the first half of the 19th century. Of greatest relevance for the purposes of the present work is the Memorandum Books for Penza Governorate.
2. There are a relatively low number of works of a fundamental nature dealing with the topic under review. The 1997 monograph 'Essays on the History of Public Education in the Penza Region' is the only major work found to provide at least some insight into the subject. By contrast, there are a decent number of articles in various publications that explore a particular segment of the region's education system (e.g., secondary education, female education, and public education).
3. As of 1854, the governorate had 28 educational institutions, including a noble institute, a gubernia gymnasium, an uyezd school, an institute for noble maidens, a private school, and a number of primary schools.
4. The region's educational institutions had a combined enrollment of 2,713 students, with the overwhelming majority of these being boys (97.7 %). This, above all, was due to adherence to the traditional patriarchal family model, which did not view women's literacy as necessary.
5. The region's education system was quite backward. There were an average of 2,936 urban residents per educational institution (all types), a worse figure even vis-à-vis the then-newly incorporated areas of the Caucasus. The low level of development in the region's education sector was associated with the dominance of serfdom there, its relative remoteness and vastness, its tough climatic conditions, and the prevalence there of traditional crafts, which did not require literacy.

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