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The System of Public Education in Dagestan Oblast (1860–1917)

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Abstract

This work explores the system of public education in Dagestan Oblast in the period 1860–1917. The present part of the work examines the period up to 1884, i.e. from the year Dagestan Oblast was founded to the year the annual reports of the Trustee of the Caucasus Educational District began to be published.

The key sources used in putting this work together are the 1879 Memorandum Book for the Caucasus Educational District and the 1884 Report from the Trustee of the Caucasus Educational District. These sources offer valuable statistical insight into the state of education in Dagestan Oblast in the period up to 1884. Use was also made of certain relevant reference materials.

The process of building a network of educational institutions in Dagestan Oblast continued up until the mid-1880s. As at 1884, the region's total student body was 773 students.

Access to secondary education was available in the region's administrative center, Temir-Khan-Shura. Lower education was available only in Derbent. In addition, the region had in place an underdeveloped network of primary schools. As a consequence, there was an imbalance in the distribution of students across the education system, with half of the region's student body attending secondary educational institutions, and the other half going to lower and primary schools.

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The ethnic composition of the region's student body was as follows: ethnic Russians – 56.7 %, mountaineers – 15.3 %, Jews – 9.7 %, and Armenians – 9 %. The rest of the ethnicities represented an insignificant share of the student body.

Keywords: Dagestan Oblast, Caucasus Educational District, period 1860–1917, ethnic composition of the student body, history of pedagogy.

1. Introduction

Dagestan Oblast was established back during the Caucasus War – in 1860. It was situated in the northeastern part of the Caucasus isthmus, north of the Main Caucasian Range. Its administrative center was Temir-Khan-Shura. Based on data from the Russian Imperial Census, Dagestan Oblast had a population of 586,636 (300,155 males and 286,481 females) as at 1897. In terms of ethnic composition, the region's population was comprised of Avars, Dargins, Lezgins, Kumyks, Laks, Tatars, ethnic Russians, Jews, Armenians, Nogais, and a few other ethnic groups ([Bol'shaya entsiklopediya, 1902: 33](#)).

2. Materials and methods

The key sources used in putting this work together are the 1879 Memorandum Book for the Caucasus Educational District and the 1884 Report from the Trustee of the Caucasus Educational District. These sources offer valuable statistical insight into the state of education in Dagestan Oblast in the period up to 1884. Use was also made of certain relevant reference materials.

The research reported in this work was conducted with observation of the following major historical research principles: historicism, systematicity, and objectivity. The principle of historicism helped to explore the system of public education in Dagestan Oblast in its historical sequence and development. The principle of systematicity helped to examine the system of education in the region across the secondary, lower, and primary levels. The principle of objectivity was employed to ensure an unbiased approach in respect of the statistical sources employed and conclusions drawn in the work. Wide use was made of the statistical method to summarize the extensive statistical material on the system of public education in Dagestan Oblast in the period up to 1884. Data were obtained on the size and ethnic composition of the student body, the numbers of educational institutions, and the size of the library stock in the region.

3. Discussion

Given that the present study is focused on the state of public education in one of the areas within the Caucasus Educational District in the period up to 1884, the focus here will be on the historiography dealing with the period up to the 1880s.

This historiography can be divided into works devoted to regions within the Caucasus Educational District and those devoted to other regions of the Russian Empire in the period under review.

The first group, focused on various aspects of the development of the system of public education in the Caucasus in the period up to 1884, includes the following body of research: N.A. Shevchenko's 'The Making of the System of Public Education in the Caucasus (1802–1917): Distinctive Features' ([Shevchenko et al., 2016](#)), O.V. Natolochnaya's 'Revisiting the System of Public Education in the Caucasus Educational District in 1848–1917. Part 1' ([Natolochnaya et al., 2021](#)), T.A. Magsumov's study on the system of public education in Kars Oblast ([Magsumov et al., 2020](#)), A.M. Mamadaliev's study on the system of public education in Tiflis Governorate ([Mamadaliev et al., 2020](#)), O.V. Molchanova's study on the system of public education in Kuban Oblast ([Molchanova et al., 2019](#)), and A.A. Cherkasov's study on the system of public education in Terek Oblast ([Cherkasov et al., 2020](#)).

The second group, focused on various aspects of the development of the prerevolutionary system of public education in other regions of the Russian Empire in the period up to 1884, most notably includes the following body of research: S.I. Degtyarev's study on the system of public education in the Kharkov Educational District ([Degtyarev, Polyakova, 2020](#)), A.Y. Peretyatko's study on the system of public education in Don Oblast ([Peretyatko, Zulfugarzade, 2017](#)), and A.A. Cherkasov's study on the system of public education in Vologda Governorate ([Cherkasov et al., 2019](#)).

4. Results

For the most part, the system of public education in the Russian Empire was comprised of the following four major levels: higher, secondary, lower, and primary. However, there were no higher educational institutions in the Caucasus Educational District during the prerevolutionary period. Accordingly, the present work will only focus on the remaining three levels – secondary, lower, and primary. Some consideration will also be given to private education, which was comprised of the following three sublevels: 1) secondary educational institutions; 2) lower educational institutions; 3) primary educational institutions.

Secondary education

Due to its distinctive ethnic composition, the creation of a network of educational institutions was a very slow process in this region. The bulk of the student body at its secondary educational institutions was typically made up of children of military and those of civil Russian officials. This was associated with the need for administrative personnel stationed in the area to have the educational needs of their own children met.

The region's first secondary educational institution, a five-grade female progymnasium, was opened in Temir-Khan-Shura on September 15, 1875 ([Otchet, 1891: table 106](#)). As at 1879, this progymnasium had an enrollment of 95 female students ([Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1879: 57](#)).

Five years later, on September 1, 1880, the region became home to an educational institution for boys as well – the seven-grade real school in Temir-Khan-Shura ([Otchet, 1885: tables](#)). Thus, as at 1880 secondary education was accessible in Dagestan Oblast to both boys and girls. Note that the region had no male gymnasiums or progymnasiums at that time.

Let us examine the state of secondary education in Dagestan Oblast as at 1884.

As at 1884, the real school in Temir-Khan-Shura had an enrollment of 286 students. It had a library stock of 4,006 items in the fundamental section and 1,176 items in the discipular one ([Otchet, 1885: tables](#)). In terms of estate composition, half of the student body was made up of children of the nobility (148), followed by children of members of the lower ranks (63) and then children of urban dwellers (59). An insignificant share of the student body was represented by children of the clergy (6), children of rural dwellers (7), and children of foreigners (3) ([Otchet..., 1885: tables](#)).

In terms of religious affiliation, the overwhelming majority of students in this sector were Orthodox Christians (194), followed by Muslims (52), Armenian Gregorian Christians (20), Jews (14), Lutherans (4), and Catholics (2) ([Otchet..., 1885: tables](#)). Note that 46 of the 52 Muslims resided at the school as boarding students.

In terms of ethnic composition, there were 174 ethnic Russians, 17 Georgians, 20 Armenians, 4 Tatars, 48 mountaineers, 14 Jews, and 9 Europeans ([Otchet..., 1885: tables](#)). Three of the nine Europeans were Orthodox Christians.

The female progymnasium in Temir-Khan-Shura had a relatively small library stock – 115 and 251 items in the fundamental and discipular sections, respectively ([Otchet..., 1885: tables](#)). A portion of its library stock may have been transferred following the establishment of the real school in the city in 1880. It was not uncommon to do so in the Caucasus Educational District.

As at 1884, the female progymnasium had an enrollment of 99. As in the case of the real school, the majority of its students were children of the nobility (55), followed by children of urban dwellers and children of members of the lower ranks (20 each) and then children of rural dwellers and children of the clergy (2 each) ([Otchet..., 1885: tables](#)). Given Dagestan Oblast's distinctive regional characteristics, namely Muslim residents generally frowning on girls attending school, the overwhelming majority of the student body was Christian (Orthodox Christians – 83, Armenian Gregorian Christians – 3, Catholics – 3, and Lutherans – 3). There also were 2 Muslims (Tatars) and 5 Jews ([Otchet..., 1885: tables](#)). In terms of ethnic composition, there were 78 ethnic Russians, 5 Georgians, 3 Armenians, 2 Tatars, 5 Jews, and 6 Europeans ([Otchet..., 1885: tables](#)). Thus, as at 1884 all secondary educational institutions in Dagestan Oblast were in its capital. The combined student body was 385 (286 boys and 99 girls). In terms of ethnic composition, there were 252 ethnic Russians, 22 Georgians, 23 Armenians, 6 Tatars, 48 mountaineers (all boys), 19 Jews, and 15 Europeans. Ethnic Russians accounted for 66% of the student body. Christians accounted for over 82 % of it. The combined library stock in the region's secondary education sector was 5,548 items.

Lower education

Derbent Uyezd School, one of the oldest educational institutions in Dagestan Oblast, was opened in 1837. On July 1, 1877, the school was reorganized into a three-grade urban school ([Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1879: 72](#)). This three-grade school was the first three-grade educational institution created outside of the capital. As at 1879, the school had an enrollment of 125 ([Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1879: 72](#)).

As at 1884, Derbent Urban School had a library stock of 1,293 items (1,056 and 237 items in the fundamental and discipular sections, respectively) ([Otchet, 1885: tables](#)).

The school's student body numbered 92 individuals, with most of these being children of urban dwellers (58), followed by children of the nobility (23), children of the clergy (6), and children of rural dwellers (5) ([Otchet, 1885: tables](#)). In terms of religious affiliation, there were 49 Orthodox Christians, 31 Armenian Gregorian Christians, and 12 Muslims. The school did not have students of other religious backgrounds at the time. In terms of ethnic composition, there were 49 ethnic Russians, 31 Armenians, and 12 Tatars ([Otchet, 1885: tables](#)).

As at 1884, Dagestan Oblast had no uyezd schools, mountain schools, tradesman's schools, and nautical courses.

Primary education

As at 1884, Dagestan Oblast had just 7 primary schools under the purview of the Ministry of Public Education (3 rural state-run schools, 1 urban school, 2 rural schools run by the Ministry of Public Education, and 1 school run by a benevolent society) ([Otchet, 1885: tables](#)). Two of these schools were two-grade, and five of them were one-grade. Four of them were for boys only, and three of them were for both boys and girls.

Four of the region's primary schools were established before 1874. Two of them were opened in 1878, and the remaining one was set up in 1879 ([Otchet, 1885: tables](#)). In terms of the ratio of schools to population, Dagestan Oblast ranked last in the Caucasus Educational District – 62,000 people per school. Compare this with the result of the second worst performer – Kars Oblast, which had 40,000 people per school¹. By contrast, in the regions dominated by ethnic Russians (e.g., Kuban Oblast), the figure was 3,900 per school ([Otchet, 1885: tables](#)).

The region's primary education sector had a combined enrollment of 274 students (196 boys and 78 girls) ([Otchet, 1885: tables](#)). In terms of estate composition, the way was led by children of urban dwellers (110), followed by children of rural dwellers (81), children of members of the lower ranks (59), children of functionaries and nobles (21), and children of the clergy (3) ([Otchet, 1885: tables](#)).

In terms of religious affiliation, there were 136 Orthodox Christians (nearly 50% of the student body), 83 Muslims, 34 Jews, 16 Armenian Gregorian Christians, and 5 Catholics ([Otchet, 1885: tables](#)). In terms of ethnic composition, there were 136 ethnic Russians, 16 Armenians, 13 Tatars, 70 mountaineers, 34 Jews, and 5 Europeans ([Otchet, 1885: tables](#)).

Private education

The lack of educational institutions in the region at the time led to the opening of private schools. Specifically, in 1878, Petrovsk became home to Madame Serpinet's four-grade female progymnasium with a boarding school. The progymnasium had 24 girls enrolled in first grade as at 1879 ([Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1879: 347-348](#)). That same year, 1878, Petrovsk also became home to Madame Barbal's private primary school. This school had an enrollment of 24 students, too ([Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1879: 348](#)).

However, as generally across the Caucasus, the region's private education sector lacked stability. K.V. Taran notes in his work on private education in the prerevolutionary Caucasus that private education in the Caucasus was something of a canary in a coal mine – typically, a rise in demand led to the opening of private educational institutions, and a drop in demand led to the closing down of such schools there ([Taran et al., 2021: 812-821](#)). In any case, there were no private educational institutions in Petrovsk as at 1884 – not anymore.

As at 1884, Dagestan Oblast had just one private mixed (primary) educational institution, which made this region the worst performer in the private education sector in the Caucasus.

¹ Note that Kars Oblast was incorporated into the Russian Empire only in 1878 ([Magsumov et al., 2020: 221-234](#)).

The school had an enrollment of 22 students (18 boys and 4 girls), all of whom were Jews (Otchet..., 1885: tables).

As regards the ethnic composition of the region's student body, Table 1 provides a snapshot of the data as at 1884.

Table 1. Ethnic Composition of the Student Body in Dagestan Oblast as at 1884

Educational institution	Ethnic Russians	Georgians	Armenians	Tatars	Mountaineers	Jews	Europeans
Secondary education							
Real school	174	17	20	4	48	14	9
Female progymnasium	78	5	3	2	-	5	6
Total	252	22	23	6	48	19	15
Lower education							
Derbent Urban School	49	-	31	12	-	-	-
Total	49	-	31	12	-	-	-
Private education							
Primary school	-	-	-	-	-	22	-
Total	-	-	-	-	-	22	-
Primary education							
Primary schools	136	-	16	13	70	34	5
Total	136	-	16	13	70	34	5
Grand total	437	22	70	31	118	75	20
Total number of students	773						

As evidenced in Table 1, there was a clear imbalance in the distribution of students across the region's education system, with half of the region's student body (385 individuals) attending secondary educational institutions, and the other half going to lower and primary schools (388 individuals – inclusive of the region's private education sector). As at 1884, ethnic Russians accounted for 56.7 % of the student body, followed by mountaineers – 15.3 %, Jews – 9.7 %, and Armenians – around 9 %.

In addition, the region had a large number of ecclesiastical schools. There was a female Armenian Gregorian parish school in Derbent (Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1879: 136). There were many Tatar schools – 83 in Avar District, 92 in Gunib District, and 10 in Derbent (Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1879: 178-179). There were 7 Jewish schools in Derbent and 1 Jewish school in Temir-Khan-Shura (Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1879: 180-181). However, these schools were primarily focused on religious education, so they were not included in the system of public education in the region.

5. Conclusion

The process of building a network of educational institutions Dagestan Oblast continued up until the mid-1880s. As at 1884, the region's total student body was 773 students.

Access to secondary education was available in the region's administrative center, Temir-Khan-Shura. Lower education was available only in Derbent. In addition, the region had in place an underdeveloped network of primary school. As a consequence, there was an imbalance in the distribution of students across the education system, with half of the region's student body attending secondary educational institutions, and the other half going to lower and primary schools.

The ethnic composition of the region's student body was as follows: ethnic Russians – 56.7 %, mountaineers – 15.3 %, Jews – 9.7 %, and Armenians – 9 %. The rest of the ethnicities represented an insignificant share of the student body.

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