11

From the Top Down? Legislation and Public Initiative in Building a School System in Russia After the Great Reforms: 1855–1914

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From a global perspective the spread of mass education might best be examined by focusing on the period 1870–1945—an interval that resulted in an enormous aggrandizement of the reach of the state in many regions of the world.[1] For the Russian Empire and subsequently the Soviet Union, the period was one of extraordinary upheaval. Those familiar with the turmoil and tragedy of those decades might well believe that the launching of mass education as a state project was but a footnote to the larger dramas of war, collapse, revolutions and rebuilding a great empire. Yet, education, urbanization and industrialization were the three pillars of modernization that under Stalin turned the Soviet Union into a superpower by the end of World War II. Sadly, the pursuit of universal literacy, which the country's educated elite and many statesmen in the pre-revolutionary and early Soviet periods

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treated as an emancipatory project concluded with the installation of one of the most vicious dictatorships of the twentieth century—in which schools played an integral role.

Yet Karl Marx's dictum about the "illusion of politics" is still relevant for the history of education, especially in the case of Russia, whose history in general has been presented as if the state were the primal mover, and state intervention correspondingly the source both for the expansion of mass education and the re-ordering of society in general.[2] Without entirely discounting that narrative, a focus on the period 1864–1905 brings to the fore an alternative story. Previous studies have demonstrated the substantial contribution Russian peasants themselves made to the expansion of schooling in the countryside.[3] Instead, this essay highlights the prominent role of a nascent civil society in the shaping of education—the professional classes and public activists working through recently created local and elected institutions of self-government, the zemstvos.

By examining the landmark 1864 Education Statute and the subsequent half century, primarily addressing schooling in European Russia, this chapter also challenges a conventional periodization of educational expansion in Russia. Rather than occuring in the Stalinist era, we learn that European Russia largely 'learned to read' before the revolution of 1917, and that it was during this period that universal literacy and schooling were put on the agenda and pursued with great effort. It was in this earlier period as well that a distinctive Russian *classroom culture* emerged, one that has persisted despite radical and frequent shifts in the political order.[4]

The Era of the Great Reforms

Until the mid-nineteenth century the tsarist autocracy was slow to engage with the question of popular education. The establishment of the Ministry of Education (literally Ministry of Enlightenment: MNP) in 1803 was soon followed by the 1804 Statute of Education which allowed for the opening of elementary schools (*prikhodskie shkoly*) in each district of European Russia.[5] Theoretically there were to be no barriers to progressing from elementary schools to gymnasia and then to a university (the so-called "ladder" system), but no funding was forthcoming and precious little was achieved. In 1828 the rungs in the ladder were removed, and district schools created by new legislation provided only for a terminal elementary education for urban commoners. From then until the era of the Great Reforms in the 1860s, the MNP did little to promote popular education. Other ministries did establish a number of schools, primarily to recruit and train scribes and secretaries for the lowest branches of their administration. In particular, the Ministry of State Domains under Count Kiselev, and the Orthodox Church, promoted schooling. As a result, when Alexander II came to the throne in 1855, only 1000 of the roughly 30,000 schools were administered by the MNP. This set a precedent and provided fuel for interministerial conflict which was to mark the second half of the century as the MNP sought to establish a monopoly over the administration, even as it sought to avoid funding, of schooling.[6]

Defeat in the Crimean War of 1853–1856 ushered in a period of self-questioning accompanied by avid public discussion (Russia's first *glasnost*, often compared with the perestroika era under Gorbachev more than a century later) and examination of every institution: serfdom, the military, finances, the court system, and education at all levels. Once Alexander II proclaimed publicly that serfdom must be abolished emancipation was inevitable even if it took five years of intense deliberations within government councils before the terms of such an emancipation could settled upon. To a large extent those terms were influenced by the financial crisis and budget deficits brought on by the Crimean War. Originally there was hope that the peasants could be freed with generous allotments of land and without incurring debts; instead the nobles would be compensated by the state for their loss of land and labor power. Because of the empty state coffers, however, the peasants ended up required to purchase the land they were to receive through loans from the state to be paid back over with interest over fifty years. The same budget crisis was soon to affect deliberations about what shape a law on education would take and who would finance the schools. In fact, the issue of financing remained central in school matters for the next half century; empty coffers did much to shape the trajectory of school expansion and control over what happened inside schools once built.

After the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 the landed nobility no longer felt obliged to look after the serfs' welfare or to provide them an education–obligations they in any case previously had fulfilled indifferently. Nor was the state prepared to step in. Despite the rapid expansion of the state bureaucracy over the course of the nineteenth century, its reach into the countryside—not to mention Siberia or the borderlands—remained minimal until the close of the century.[7] This vacuum in the countryside was now to be filled by newly established *zemstvos* (1864), whose delegates, representing all classes of the population, were to build hospitals, roads, schools, and provide agricultural aid at the local level, drawing upon property taxes they were now empowered to levy. The reforms of local government also included the establishment of elected municipal *dumas* in the towns. There were aspirations to turn these self-governing institutions at the local level into the building blocks of a parliamentary system, but the autocracy would have none of that, and thus severely curtailed the powers of the zemstvos.

Thus it was up to the state to take the initiative in education, and for the zemstvos to *implement* any measures taken. When considering the progressive measures launched in education at the time, the name of Aleksandr Golovnin, who was MNP from 1861 to 1866 is most often cited. Golovnin was forty years old when first appointed, and set about replacing the gerontocracy at the top of his ministry with a cohort of officials of the same age or younger who were part of a younger generation of so called "enlightened bureaucrats" well versed in European institutions and practices and devoted to the interests of the state rather than to the landed nobility who had up until the mid-century dominated the Russian civil service.[8]

A comprehensive internal restructuring unfolded over several years and involved, in 1863, a new set of regulations significantly redistributing the functions of the central branches of the ministry and decentralizing its decision making, giving ample powers to the curators of its eight large educational regions (*okruga*), each encompassing several provinces themselves the size of Ireland or larger (two districts alone covered a territory as large as Europe).

During this period Golovnin sought to bring all schools—secondary and primary—under the jurisdiction of the MNP. Over the next decade, seeking ways to cut expenditures in a time of budget crisis, most of the other departments and ministries hosting networks of primary schools were more than willing to go along with this program. The MNP, itself under budget strictures, then changed its tune and argued that only the administration of schools, and not the funding, should come under its domain.

The MNP nevertheless worked relentlessly to incorporate schools under its purview, beginning with the Ministry of State Domains in 1869, but then reaching out to the borderlands, which meant the Baltic region in 1873 and 1887; the Tatar, Kirghiz and Bashkir schools of the Volga region in 1874; the schools of the German Mennonite colonists in 1881; all non-Orthodox schools in the provinces of the former Poland (1887); and those of the Caucasus (1892).[9] In the process, the language of instruction and the teaching of the Orthodox catechism became intractable issues that the autocracy was to struggle with for the remainder of its time in power. These issues only exacerbated the prolonged struggle between secularists and the MNP on the one hand, and the Holy Synod on the other hand for financial underwriting of their schools. Regrettably the issue of the borderlands—something central to historians of Russia today—must be left to the side in this short chapter, but the rivalry between Holy Synod and MNP was key to the collapse of the Duma Bill of 1908 to which we return below.[10]

Still, while a cohort of “enlightened civil servants” played a significant role in launching reforms, it was the *interplay* of public and official opinion mediated by the periodical press in this era of ‘glasnost’ that defined the era’s significance for education. Of enormous importance was the remaking of the MNP house journal which, under the direction of Konstantin Ushinsky—the founder of Russian pedagogy—was to become the voice of progressive pedagogy in the country. Reform also received a huge boost from a landmark essay published in the immediate aftermath of the Crimean War in *Morskoi Sbornik* (the journal under the Naval Ministry and Grand Duke Konstantin titled “Life’s Urgent Questions”).[11] The author was the noted surgeon N.I. Pirogov, who argued for a meritocracy, and called for a humane approach to teaching, including abolishing corporal punishment. The then Minister of Education was so impressed by the article that he appointed Pirogov as curator for one of Russia's most important educational districts, where he set about enacting his views through a series of progressive regulations and articles which were read avidly by the public. Indeed, schooling was one of the main political issues of the era. Although the "woman question," the "peasant question," the "Polish question" were all fraught topics at the time, a volume of the periodical press was seldom published without attention to the schools. In this public discourse the focus concentrated upon how education could meet the needs of the individual, not the state.

The Statute of 1864

So, what legislation ensued? The 1864 Statute was the outcome of more than eight years of deliberation involving state and society, but with a gradually narrowing circle of participants producing increasingly conservative iterations of the bill, finally approved by the State Council (until 1906, an advisory board of senior officials) and signed by the Emperor in a version little resembling its earliest drafts. As early as 1856 Alexander II himself had instructed the newly re-assembled MNP Learned Committee to develop proposals for the reform of primary and secondary schools. But it was only in 1860 that the first draft was produced and was widely circulated.

The public response in newspapers and journals to the draft was so expansive that the Learned Committee was forced to go back to the drawing board and make significant changes. Then, early in 1862, Minister Golovnin sent a revised version to the powerful regional educational curators (there were seven such regions for the entire country at the time) with instructions to solicit comment from universities and the pedagogical committees of provincial gymnasia. Translations were made into English, German and French and sent abroad for comments. The 1862 draft along with commentary from Russian sources, was published that year in six volumes, as were the commentaries from foreign sources in a separate volume the following year. All of this, along with the minister's own conclusions, were sent to the State Council, which then revised the draft, and produced the version which became law on June 14, 1864. With some exceptions for Muslim, Jewish and Protestant schools, this law was to be followed to the letter across the empire.

Compared with the early drafts, the revisions of the law were significant. The process by which the progressive core of the statute of 1864 was deleted from previous drafts has been thoroughly studied by Soviet era scholars.[12] In a nutshell, between 1860 and 1864 the goals of Russian education were redefined. While the 1862 draft had set as the goal of the school "the moral and cognitive development of children so that every child could learn of his rights and how to fulfil his obligations rationally" the final version aimed at "imbuing religious and moral foundations and disseminating elementary knowledge of a useful sort."[13] Autonomous pedagogical councils with autonomy to determine content and schedule as well as select textbooks were eliminated. All expenditures for building and maintaining schools and providing teachers with a salary were to be assumed by peasant communes and local government. Fees were to be made optional rather than eliminated entirely.

The statute of 1864 included a more restrictive curriculum compared to previous drafts. All mention of *nagliadnoe obuchenie* (visual education) and explanatory reading, the cornerstones of progressive pedagogy in Russia at the time and later, was eliminated. Instead, the official content was reduced to Bible study, Russian language, reading in secular and canonical literature, writing and the four functions of arithmetic. Local priests were now instructed to carefully observe that the tone and practice of teaching followed religious lines, and to report to the school boards if not so. The language of instruction was to be Russian (educators had argued that minority children be taught in their own language for the first two years while also learning Russian). A major theme of the 1862 draft—the elimination of barriers to secondary education—was also dropped.

As with other reforms at the time, a closer look at the process that resulted in the statute of 1864 reveals a picture of shared optimism and progressive aspirations buffeted and gradually whittled down by a budgetary crisis in the aftermath of the Crimean War, and a conservative reaction in defense of privilege and status against the ambitions of liberal reformers. Disturbances by radical university students and especially the violent Polish rebellion against Russian rule in the borderlands in 1863–1864 further contributed to the steps backward. In some ways, both the process and the outcome of the 1864 Statute also resembled that of the 1804 legislation: at that earlier time a statutory framework had been established enabling the creation of a primary school system funded by society but administered by the state. For the most part, the law of 1804 had remained a dead letter because at the time this pre-modern state had little ability to intervene in local affairs or to implement whatever it legislated. But in the case of the 1864 Statute, the progressive ideas stemming from the contribution made by society in the early years of 'glasnost' under Alexander II—while gutted from the statute itself—persisted in societal circles, and re-emerged to shape the essential features of the *zemstvo* school in subsequent years within the framework of that legislation. To that story we now turn.

The Evolution of Schooling 1864–1894

Disappointment was widespread with the 1864 Statute, especially with the lack of provision for funding, the removal of rungs on the ladder to secondary and higher education for commoners, the strictures on the language of instruction, and elimination of a role for the wider public in affecting the content of education. Further distress was created by the establishment of an inspectorate in 1869 and instructions governing their work (1871), as well as a plethora of regulations that followed in subsequent decades. A revised Statute (1874) put further restrictions upon public input in popular education. The *zemstvo* was to keep hands off of pedagogy and the content of education, and to busy itself exclusively with providing for the material side of education (in Russian, *khoziaistvo*).

The lawmakers' intention was to promote the building of schools by local society while retaining central control over what was taught and how. Instructions (1871) gave the Learned Committee the authority to evaluate all textbooks and readers to be used in the classroom, placing them in three categories: recommended, permitted, and forbidden.[14] Recently opened teacher training seminaries (1864) were strictly regulated (1870), severely limiting the opportunities of non-governmental institutions such as the *zemstvo* in this sphere. During Dmitry Tolstoy's time (1866–1880) as Minister of National Education, forty-four *state-run* teachers' seminaries were established.[15]

As historians have often noted, the heavy regulatory hand of the autocracy played a significant role in turning education into a major issue of contestation between state and society, thereby creating a generation of radical public activists who saw a democratized and locally controlled classroom as the key to transforming society. In reality, however, the realm of schooling was much less controlled by the central government and much less rigid in content, textbooks, or classroom ambience than might be concluded by looking only at the prescriptive literature emanating from St. Petersburg or the critical literature and exposés written by specialists of an oppositionist bent. Moreover, for those schools under the control of the MNP, funding constraints prevented the government from hiring sufficient numbers of inspectors. Up until the turn of the century, *uezdy* (districts)[16] had only one inspector who was charged with visiting up to 120 schools, often separated by considerable distance and dismal roads during the long Russian winter. Schools were rarely visited more than once a year, and many schools saw an inspector less than that, and then for a period of only two to three hours.[17] As late as 1911, when the inspectorate had expanded, each official was entrusted with an average of almost ninety schools.

Local school boards also sometimes offered a venue for public input into the workings of the schools, especially when it came to the hiring and firing of teachers. Initially, the drafts of the 1864 Statute had included provision for elected pedagogical councils to run each school, but this notion was squashed, and the MNP's intention was clearly to establish a tight linkage running from the minister through the curator, director to the inspector. But resistance from the other ministries curbed these aspirations, and instead school boards were set up at the district and provincial level chaired by the local marshal of the nobility. These school boards included the church parish school inspector and MNP inspectors, a representative of the Ministry of Interior and any other branch of the bureaucracy sponsoring schools in the district, as well as two representatives of the local *zemstvo*. Most school boards met only twice a year for roughly a week and have largely been ignored or dismissed by historians as rubber stamping autocratic policies. But research in the archives of the huge Kazan' educational region by this author suggests that on occasion such school boards could be independent actors in the unpredictable alliances of local politics. They might be riven with conflict, or together stand up against the hierarchy of the MNP or Holy Synod, sometimes defending the *zemstvo*, which itself was often in a fraught relationship with these two institutions and the gubernatorial administration.

Most of all it was the *zemstvos*, those elected institutions of local self-government established initially in 34 provinces in European Russia—by 1915 their number had reached 43—that took advantage of loose and ill-defined regulation to play a public role in schooling. After an early flurry of constitutional aspirations, *zemstvos* had settled down to the humbler tasks of providing social and medical services. Dominated in most areas by the local nobility, and hemmed in by autocratic restrictions, the *zemstsy* (delegates) were often reluctant to tax themselves. The delegates nevertheless found money to support primary schools and even women's gymnasia which provided a supply of teachers for primary schools.

The strategy that the *zemstvos* usually adopted was to concentrate on villages which had already themselves organized and funded some sort of instruction for their children (*vol'nye shkoly*). The *zemstvo* would provide supplemental grants and expertise to peasant communities that were themselves willing to take responsibility for providing land, a building as well as night lodgings for pupils in the far north (where harsh winters often prohibited lengthy walks to school), a salary and lodgings for the teacher, fuel for the winter, and often a garden. For that reason, the progress achieved might better be credited to the peasantry itself, who largely footed the bill. Peasants increasingly recognized the urgency of acquiring literacy and numeracy in a rapidly changing and precarious world in which knowing how to read signs and documents and utilize conventional measurements was key to survival.[18]

Rather than by funding it was in defining the design of the primary school and shaping the contours of classroom practice that the zemstvo, interpreting the term *khoziaistvo* very loosely, was most important—for the providing for and controlling of schooling were difficult to separate as realms of schooling.[19] A central figure in designing the school was Baron N. Korf, a graduate of the elite Alexandrov lyceé who participated as an elected delegate to the Ekaterinoslav provincial *zemstvo*, and a member of the district school board. Korf set about mobilizing the local peasants in his district to set up over a hundred schools in a five-year period (1867–1872). Through his activities and writings, he created the prototype of the *zemstvo* school, with one teacher presiding over three sections; a school day including two three-hour classes separated by a two-hour break and recess. The course of instruction included not only reading, writing and arithmetic, but also Russian grammar, history, and geography. The textbook he used was Ushinsky's *Rodnoe Slovo* and its accompanying reader *Nash Drug*—works not favoured by the textbook censors in the MNP.

Korf also authored the all-embracing *Handbook* (1870) which offered a comprehensive guide to classroom practices and got published in twenty-five editions. In it was also a chapter on buildings, where he insisted that three conditions make instructions successful: adequate light, warmth and space.[20] Natural light was a main key because candles were too expensive for village budgets. Adequate space was necessary to allow movement about the classroom on winter days and to avoid cramped seating, and thereby reduce the spread of contagious disease—a problem everywhere in Europe when schools first brought children from different families together into one room for extended periods. Proper heating was crucial; otherwise pupils would remain in their outer garments all day long: "Imagine the stench in the classroom when children are sitting about in their sheepskin coats."[21] Korf also included a model school design for a building to accommodate 75 pupils. It is unlikely that schools in more than a few areas resembled this model because until the 1890s most schools were housed in rented or renovated buildings. Yet his basic categories—warmth, space, and light—remained the main indicators by which the quality of school facilities was measured until 1914.

Until 1908 the government itself had no official regulations or codes governing school buildings and virtually no means to supervise rural schools, whether church or *zemstvo*-run.[22] By contrast, as early as 1870, the *zemstvos* themselves began to draw up health codes, based primarily upon the recommendations of the Second Congress of Moscow Doctors (1877). Subsequent congresses refined the basic guidelines as well as producing new blueprints for multi-complex schools, two-class schools, schools of brick, stone and wood, schools in warm and cold climates, and schools in rich and poor districts.

When the great spurt of school construction, spearheaded by provincial *zemstvos*, began in the 1890s, these regulations were codified and adopted by the Moscow *zemstvo* assembly (1895), and then published as *Model Plans for School Buildings* (1898). Approved by the Pirogov Medical Society, the booklet rapidly went through several editions and influenced school design everywhere in Russia.[23] While the absence of central government guidelines and supervision over building plans and health codes ensured a good deal of regional variety in Russia, the popularity of the Moscow plans as well as testimony of school experts at the time allow us to conclude that a large number of schools built after 1900 resembled the structures designed for the Moscow *zemstvo*.

Thus, in matters of spatial arrangements and hygiene it was society rather than the state that defined the environment. Concern for the well-ordered and productive classroom also produced a large cohort of educators whose names are still familiar to teachers in Russia today and whose influence on the daily life of the school was enormous, including Nikolai Bunakov, Vasilii Vodovozov, Nikolai Tikhomirov and others. Literacy societies formed in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Khar'kov and elsewhere added to this mix, as did the more than fifty pedagogical journals in print by that time.

Official control over the textbooks in use was often spotty—the will was there, but the means were lacking.[24] Even the Model Curriculum published in 1897—a deliberate attempt to impose more state control over what was taught—allowed enough room for explanatory readings in history, geography and literature to diverge from the straight and narrow. More important were the encyclopaedic manuals published for local educators. One such manual, written by A.A. Anastasiev, a notable director of schools in Viatka province, was first published at the turn of the century, and went through ten editions before 1914. It was such educators, and their handbooks, texts and readers, which guided teachers in their daily practices. Inspectors, as well as moderately progressive educators, were the most likely to be involved in summer refresher courses for rural teachers, which provided a rare opportunity for the latter to mingle with peers, and learn from experts how better to cope with the challenges they encountered in the villages.

The turn-of-the-century Russian pedagogy was, in the dual capital cities of St. Petersburg and Moscow, polarised between conservative and progressive proponents locked in conflict over language, religion, and control of the schools. But outside the capital cities, at summer teacher training courses, among school inspector s and directors as well as *zemstvo* employees; that is, at the level of practice, a consensus emerged about how schools should be run at the turn of the century. This consensus encompassed what teachers should teach and how, what kind of disciplinary measures were appropriate, and what results could be expected from the three- to four-year school.

This mainstream pedagogy was distinct in that it emphasised a tightly structured schedule (teachers were responsible for two to three classrooms simultaneously), textbook learning, much rote learning combined with memorisation, classroom recitations, oral calculations, as well as ‘explanatory readings,’ and visual education (*nagliadnoe obuchenie*).[25] This pedagogy also stressed the “concentric approach”, which meant that instruction should begin with the near and tangible, moving gradually outwards (geographically and conceptually) to the more distant and abstract, but always grounded in the senses, the tangible and the nearby. Mainstream pedagogy supported the unchallenged authority of the teacher, yet also banished corporal punishment from the schools, and promoted a benevolent view of the intrinsic goodness of the child.[26]

Thus, the result of the school system following the statute of 1864 was co-operation rather than conflict between teachers, *zemstvo* educators, and local inspectors (Anastasiev was, after all, himself a local official).[27] As a consequence, what can be called a “distinct culture of Russian pedagogy,” emerged, quite untouched by the conflict over education which raged at the national level. These characteristics may well explain the marked success achieved by Russian schools; this classroom culture persisted well into the Soviet period, leaving traces even today. Slowly but steadily too, specially-built *zemstvo* schools began to dot the landscape. Above all, once again it was the inability of a "peasant government" to *fund* education, whether by paying for the building of schools or employing inspectors to supervise those schools which had been established, which provided an opportunity for societal initiative.

The Sea Change of the 1890s

Still, it would take a change of mind set in the 1890s, a more concerted effort, and a combination of forces—popular, *zemstvo* and state—to create the surge that transformed Russian education and by 1914 brought European Russia within just more than a decade of offering universally accessible primary education. Before the 1890s, the strategy of relying upon peasant initiative alone had led to only uneven growth in the number of schools which could not keep pace with rapid population growth. The first studies made in the early 1880s had seemingly demonstrated that the scale of the effort required to make schooling universally accessible was simply out of reach for the time being. As fears arose of a looming agrarian crisis and arrears in collecting taxes from the peasantry mounted, many *zemstvos* concluded in the 1880s that the school model provided by Korf was not viable. Attempts were made instead to set up "literacy schools" offering but one or two years of instruction, or to turn over all responsibility for schooling to the Holy Synod, which was the governing body of the Russian Orthodox Church. In competition with the MNP, the Holy Synod had been pushing one to two-year literacy schools or providing full-fledged, but poorly funded parish schools.

In the 1890s, the lethargy and doubt were superseded by the conviction that Russia's fate depended upon achieving universal elementary education as soon as possible.[28] This belief became so widespread in the nineties that enrolment rates and per capita expenditures on schooling came to be regarded by the educated public as the measurements of both a country's strength and level of civilization. The campaign that ensued involved the literacy committees, the burgeoning periodical press, professional societies, and *zemstvos* which were rapidly mobilizing politically in the aftermath of a terrible famine in the Volga region that had carried away a quarter of a million people and convinced many that the fate of the country could not be left to the autocracy. Particularly important was the rise of professional organizations, including those of *zemstvo* employees (doctors, teachers, statisticians, agronomists), who felt their ability to serve the population was hindered by government suspicion of their political disloyalty. As opposition grew among the educated classes, a generation of gifted and energetic radical activists in Moscow and St. Petersburg succeeded in making the democratization of education a central point in their program for the transformation of Russia.

In 1894, V.P. Vakhterov, inspector of schools in Moscow and member of the Moscow *zemstvo* commission on education—later a renowned educational theorist whose works have been republished in the post-Soviet era—gave a speech to the Moscow Literacy Society in which he called for the immediate implementation of universal primary education (*vseobuch*). Vakhterov argued that the creators of the 1864 Statute had borrowed the worst aspects of foreign school systems from the West: tight control over curriculum and reliance exclusively upon local funding. He claimed that earlier estimates of the scale of the effort needed to achieve universal education had been overstated by those earlier studies, which had miscalculated the size of the school-age population.[29] He argued that both the sums of money and number of schools needed were actually within reach, especially if the education of girls was given only secondary attention—he believed education should be compulsory, but for boys alone. His speech was printed in thousands of copies and later published in *Russkaia mysl'*, and the outpouring of commentary on it was enormous. Critics challenged many of his assumptions as well as his strategy, but as the prominent academic A.I. Chuprov later remembered, Vakhterov had managed to focus in the society at large "a belief in the attainability of universal education [….] and to infuse its advocates with burning energy."[30]

Indeed, a turning point in society was reached between 1894 and 1897. In that three-year interval, twenty four of the thirty-four provincial *zemstvo* assemblies discussed how to achieve universal primary education; seventeen actually undertook systematic studies of the current state of education in their location and twenty set up special loan and grant funds to build schools. The leader in this effort was the Moscow provincial *zemstvo*, which had carried out detailed cadastral and household surveys in the previous decade, and now used these studies to design and begin implementing a plan for establishing schools within a three-kilometre radius of every household in the province. Other *zemstvos* drew upon the principles and terms of the Moscow plan for their own purposes; its imprint is also visible in the plans drawn up by the MNP when it finally set out to achieve universally accessible enrolment.

Accompanying these endeavours was the establishment—despite sporadic harassment by local governors or representatives of the MNP—of permanent school commissions and bureaus in virtually all of the *zemstvo* provinces by 1908. By the turn of the century, after having appropriated responsibility for school matters from more lethargic local-level counterparts [*uezd*], most provincial-level *zemstvos* had assumed responsibility for school construction, supplements to teachers' salaries, stocking school libraries and, in some cases, sponsoring school lunches as well as night lodgings (especially in the northern regions). By now, the principle of a free, universally *accessible* education was widely accepted in educational circles. However, the *compulsory* education proposed by Vakhterov was rejected as unfeasible (financially) or even undesirable given the long history of arbitrary autocratic rule.

After 1905

Perhaps the most important societal forum for educators after 1905 was the League of Education, established by former members of the Moscow Literacy Committee, which had been taken over by the government a decade earlier. The League created a network of local organizations promoting educational goals, but its most important contribution was the drafting of a proposal to thoroughly reform existing school legislation and to make education universally accessible. The proposal formed the core of the progressive platform in education after 1905,[31] and was submitted to the Second *Duma* and circulated throughout Russia for discussion.[32] The famous *zemstvo* congress of provincial directors of executive boards of November, 1904 calling for limits to autocracy, popular representation and the rule of law, included education among its eleven political demands. After the turmoil of 1905–1907, public pressure in the sphere of education soon picked up once again. An All-*Zemstvo* Congress on Education was held in Moscow in 1911. Other events included the All-Russia Library Congress (June 1911) which devoted much time to school libraries; an All-Russia Congress on Public Education (December–January 1913–1914), a Congress on Extramural Education and another on Educational Statistics in 1913—all were thoroughly covered by the press, well attended and the focus of much public attention.

Thus, as a new generation of professionals found employment in the *zemstvo*, a cadre of school doctors, hygienists, statisticians, extra-mural educators, architects and curriculum specialists coalesced to provide much needed expertise about schooling, book warehouses and distribution points, and by the turn of the century an impressive culture of expertise on schooling was readily available. The contours of Russian pedagogy and the look and feel of the classroom evolved in this period within the very loose and pliant framework of the 1864 Statute and largely within the ideological constellation that had been framed during the brief period of state encouragement of public discourse during the Great Reforms.

Yet it would take another decade, a massive investment of funds on the part of the state itself, legislation by the new parliament established in the aftermath of the bloody 1905 Revolution, and a concerted effort to launch a campaign which by the eve of World War I put European Russia within a decade of achieving the goal of fully accessible, if not compulsory education. The *Duma* School Bill of 1908, unlike the 1864 School Statute, remains largely neglected by historians and cannot be examined here, for it was taken up in a context in which the relationship between Russian workers and peasants, educated society and the state had shifted in fundamental ways. In short, the *comprehensive* School Bill first submitted in 1908 was never passed. Issues of class, religion and ethnicity which plagued the *Duma* (the lower house of the Russian Parliament) from its onset (surfacing in the Western *zemstvo* Bill and a failed bill to reform local government) also doomed its passage. The *Duma* and the State Council (now after 1906 the upper parliamentary branch) could never agree upon whether or not all classes in all schools should be taught exclusively in Russian or whether indigenous minority populations should be given the right for instruction in their native language for the first two years. The *Duma* also voted to exclude the church parish schools of the Holy Synod from the proposed comprehensive school network—something the upper house vociferously rejected. That bill was reintroduced in 1912, but efforts to reconcile the *Duma* and State Council failed again.

Still, a separate if linked bill submitted by the MNP for school construction (the Peter the Great Fund) provided the funding for a massive drive to build schools within local networks planned and organized by the zemstvo. In the interval since 1864 a pre-modern autocracy had evolved into a newly interventionist state[33] buoyed by a rapidly expanding economy which had made Russia the world's fifth largest industrial power. Consequently, unprecedented sums of money now poured into school construction. The results in education were obvious in enrolment statistics by 1914.[34] Studies have shown that in contrast to a persistent mythology of "educational failure" in Imperial Russia, approximately three-quarters of the school-age population in European Russia were actually receiving between two and three years of elementary education on the eve of World War I. The stated goal of achieving universal enrolment of children age 8–11 by 1922 was not unrealistic.[35]

Even more striking—but this is the topic of another essay—other studies suggested that even in this short time they were mastering both basic literacy and numeracy (the skills of reading, writing and carrying out simple mathematical computations) and retaining these skills years later.[36] Were these striking results achieved largely because of that distinctive Russian pedagogy—highly structured but also child-centred-described above? An intriguing thought in the context of global literacy studies.

In summary, a nascent civil society, educational activists and a boisterously emerging professional class with oppositionist inclinations took advantage of the limited reach of a traditional Russian state to establish the culture of the school (both material and pedagogical). But it also took massive state funding to fully achieve the goal of *massification* after the turn of the century—even if that expansion took place in accordance with plans drawn up by *zemstvos* and those very professionals. Consequently, it can be concluded that the progress achieved was noteworthy, and it was a result of a joint effort by state and society all the more remarkable given the overall tensions and conflicts prevalent in Imperial Russia at the time and the incompetence of the Romanov dynasty. The Russian experience supports the thesis that *both* state and society contribute to mass education. From a global perspective, Russia was not alone in this; as one scholar writing of educational expansion in twentieth century Mexico put it: "[N]ew research suggest[s] that the process of building and governing schooling from the bottom up itself contributed to state formation, rather than the other way around." In Russia, as in Mexico, schools appeared as "enacting [but also] contesting state forms."[37]

Notes

1. Brockliss and Sheldon, *Mass Education and the Limits of State Building*.
2. Winkler, "Rulers and Ruled."
3. See, e.g., Eklof, Russian Peasant Schools.
4. Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*; Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools.* The argument for the creation of a distinctive Russian classroom culture can be found in Eklof, "*Laska i Poriadok.*" References to a copious literature in Russian as well as to archival sources in Russia can be found in these books and articles.
5. This chapter deals primarily with European Russia. While recent scholars have convincingly argued that like gender, empire is a category embedded in virtually any aspect of Russian life. Moreover, issues of language, ethnicity and religion were central to educational discourses too. One can also argue that when examining the spread of mass education across Europe, scholars tend to treat the colonies of each European state as a separate topic, as we do here with Russia's colonized but contiguous borderlands.

6. Dal'man, *Razvitie sistemy upravleniia narodnym obrazovaniiem v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka.*
7. Roger Bartlett has pointed out the similarities between Russian governance and the "fiscal state" of early modern Europe, designed to extract maximum resources from the peasantry for military purposes, though, "less well endowed with fiscal techniques than the states of Western Europe." Bartlett concludes that the rural sociologist Gered Spittler is more precise in labelling the "resource mobilizing" state whose reach was severely limited by "peasant village autarchy" as a "peasant state." (Bartlett, *A History of Russia*, 93, 102–10.) Indeed, in the localities its presence was barely noted; given the huge size of the country, and its relatively small bureaucracy (as a ratio of civil servants to population, not to mention territory) scholars have sometimes talk of Imperial Russia being "undergoverned."
8. W. Bruce Lincoln, *In the Vanguard of Reform.*
9. Dal'man, *Razvitie sistemy upravleniia narodnym obrazovaniiem v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka*, 34–35. MNP attempts to assert control over Muslim medrese and mektebe ran into opposition from the Ministry of Interior in 1888 which argued that in light of the "scale" and "importance" of the question, the need to observe "caution" and proceed "gradually," as well as inadequacy of resources, the question should be shelved. From my own research in the Volga region, however, I have discovered that MNP inspectors visited such schools and reported regularly on conditions there.
10. Despite effort by the MNP to monopolize control over elementary education, fifty years after the promulgation of the 1864 Statute, N.V. Chekhov counted more than thirty types of primary schools in the Russian empire. Yet the vast majority of these schools resembled in structure and content those managed by the MNP. See Chekhov, *Tipy russkoi shkoly v ikh istoricheskom razvitii.*
11. "Voprosy zhizni," *Morskoi sbornik*, July 1856, no. 9, pp. 559–597.
12. Konstantinov and Struminskii, *Ocherki po istorii nachal'nogo obrazovaniia v Rossii*; Smirnov, *Reforma nachal'noi i srednei shkoly v 60-ikh godakh XIX*.
13. Konstantinov and Struminskii, 127–31.
14. Smirnov, *Reforma*, 152–53.
15. Ibid., 152–57.

16. At the turn of the twentieth century administrative districts, of which provinces in European Russia generally had 10–12, were intended to have a population of approximately 200,000 each. Educational districts, or regions, *(okruga)* on the other hand, incorporated up to ten provinces, each of which was often the size of a European country.
17. Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools*, 120–54; Zviagintsev, *Inspektsiia narodnykh uchilishch*; Seregny, "Power and Discourse in Russian Elementary Education."
18. Westberg, *Funding the Rise of Mass Schooling*.
19. For a thorough discussion of the topic of models of peasant education in public discourse in the period from the Great Reforms to World War I, see Romanov, *Nachal'noe obrazovanie russkogo krest'ianstva v poslednei chetverti XIX-nachale XX vekov: ofitsial'naia politika I obshchestvennye modeli*, 97–209.
20. Ibid., 31.
21. Korf, *Russkaia nachal'naia shkola: Rukovodstvo dlia zemskikh glasnykh i uchitelei sel'skoi shkoly*, 31.
22. See Charnoluskii, *Zemstvo i narodnoe obrazovanie*, vol. I, 11, 77–80; Kapterev, *Novye dvizheniia v oblasti narodnogo obrazovaniia i srednei shkoly*, 145–46; Verigin, *V pomoshch' uchashchim v nachal'nykh narodnykh uchilishchakh*, 182.
23. Eklof, "Kindertempel or Shack?" 117–43.
24. The catalogue of approved textbooks produced by the Learned Committee was usually very much out of date and the books used in the classroom or found in school libraries were often not on the list, or had actually been rejected for use (for reasons including "political unreliability of the author"). Budgets were so tight that the *zemstvos* sponsoring schools could plausibility claim that they had no option but to continue using such books (or put the inspector in the unenviable situation of carrying out his job and leaving teachers with no textbooks at all for the classroom)—this was not unusual.
25. A more detailed argument for the existence of a distinctive Russian classroom culture can be found in Eklof, "Laska i Poriadok." See also Dneprov, *Ocherki istorii russkoi shkoly*, 173–312.
26. The emphasis upon a structured environment stemmed from the rigours of one teacher being responsible simultaneously for two to three groups of students, while the benevolent view of childhood, especially

peasant childhood, had deep roots in nineteenth-century Russian culture. See Wachtel, *The Battle for Childhood*.

27. Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools*, 120–54.
28. Ibid., 98.
29. In Europe the school-age was commonly set as 8–14; Vakhterov and others argued instead that it should be set at 8–11. E.G. West has argued that a similar error misled English educators earlier in the century. See West, "The Interpretation of Early Nineteenth-Century Education Statistics."
30. Cited in Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools*, 110–14 for a summary of Vakhterov's calculations.
31. *Liga obrazovaniia, Proekt shkol'nago zakona: s pilozheniem primernago ischisleniia stoimosti vvedeniia vseobshchago obrazovaniia v Rossii*. St. Peterburg, 1908.
32. Kairov et al., *Pedagogicheskaia entsiklopediia*, 627; Piskunov, *Ocherki istorii shkoly i pedagogicheskoi mysli narodnov SSSR. Vtoraia polovina XIX*, 357. The history of the League of Education remains to be written.
33. Winkler, "Rulers and Ruled, 1700–1917."
34. For a study of the implementation of the funding program, see Chekini on "nachal'noe narodnoe obrazovanie" found in Brokgauz-Efron, *Novyi entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*, vol. 28, 129–49. By comparison, see Westberg, *Funding the Rise of Mass Schooling*.
35. Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools*, 283–314; Working independently of Eklof, Jeffrey Brooks arrived at the same figures, which differ radically from the estimates which had previously widely circulated.
36. Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools*, 389–418.
37. Rockwell and Roldán Vera, "State Governance and Civil Society in Education."

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