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«66 % of Literacy Among the Male Population of School Age Brings it Closer to Common Education» vs «in the Largest Villages, it was Difficult to Meet a Literate Person»: the Main Statistical Indicators of Primary Education Among Don Cossacks in the XIX Century. Part 1

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Abstract

The question about the degree of development of primary education in the Don in the XIX century remains controversial among historians. Archival documents and testimonies of contemporaries allow us to cover this question in completely different ways (both quotes in the title are taken from them). The article attempts to summarize statistical information about the development of primary education in the Don Cossack environment from 1799 to 1899. A number of myths prevalent in historiography (for example, about the significant role of zemstvos in the creation of new educational institutions in villages or about the crisis of Don education in 1880–1890) are debunked.

Keywords: history of education on the Don, primary education of the Don Cossacks in the XIX century, district schools, parish schools, parochial schools, literacy schools.

1. Introduction

“The Don Cossack Host is second to last in terms of school enrollments, and is the last one in terms of the number of schools as compared to other irregular military formations” (Nash krai, 1963: 467); “In the largest villages, even in those closest to towns and cities, it was difficult to meet a literate person” (Nash krai, 1963: 465); “The school is in the most wretched state in all respects” (Nash krai, 1963: 466). All these are excerpts from the documents featured in the milestone anthology “Our Land” (Nash krai), prepared by leading Soviet historians of Don Cossacks in 1963 (the list of authors included a number of respected researchers such as A.P. Pronshtein and I.P. Khlystov). Naturally, all the excerpts are original, but they, just like compilers’ comments do,

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reflect only one facet of reality. The authors had to pick up archival materials echoing ideological statements defined in the preface to the section “Enlightenment on the Don”: “Primary and secondary education was in a plight until October 1917” (Nash krai, 1963: 459); “The reform of public education was increasingly curtailed by the government. The reactionary steps particularly intensified in the 80s-90s” (Nash krai, 1963: 459).

On the other hand, a polar opposite trend is now taking shape to idealize the pre-revolutionary Don education. For example, a Taganrog historian, L.A. Donskova, in one of her papers, says that the stance of Soviet historians on education was not only “a tribute to the narrow, class-biased and politicized approach of the Soviet era”, but also “suffered from one-sidedness and was unable to consider multiple and contradictory aspects of the government’s educational policies” (Donskova, 2008: 133). Yet she further provides a similar one-sided and idealized picture of “the authorities and society combining their efforts in the field of education”, based on “ideas of the common good and religious virtues” (Donskova, 2008: 138). Interestingly, the modern author repeatedly refers to information from the “Our Land” anthology of documents, but interprets them in a completely different way inconsistent with Soviet researchers. For example, while the anthology compilers saw the launch of new educational institutions in 1860-1870 as a least-evil measure by the government that did provide financing for the most of the facilities (Nash krai, 1963: 458), L.A. Donskova regards this increase in primary and secondary schools as an illustration of “consolidated efforts by the Don Oblast administration, zemstvos, the public” (Donskova, 2008: 133-135).

At the same time, neither Soviet historians nor today’s researchers made any attempts to systematize even the essential statistical information on education on the Don in the 19th century. In fact, the only person who tried to act on the matter was the secretary of the Don Statistical Committee, S.F. Nomikosov, who pointed out in 1884 that the number of students in the Don region doubled in 1830-1860, grew by 6 times in 1860-1870, and only by 1.7 times in 1870-1880 (Nomikosov, 1884: 575). It is already clear from this information that a popular Soviet statement claiming that “the introduction of zemstvo institutions on the Don in the 70s also contributed to the growing number of primary schools” (Nash krai, 1963: 458), is a historiographical myth, and in the zemstvo period on the Don, the pace of opening new school actually slowed down dramatically as compared to the previous decade. For this reason, we decided to elaborate on the idea of S.F. Nomikosov, and trace how the number of schools and their students grew on the Don in the 19th century, and then, using the information gathered as a basis, to develop an understanding of the factors that actually hampered and accelerated the expansion of education.

2. Materials and methods

Nevertheless, certain circumstances impeded the use of this research method. First of all, the borders of the Don Host Oblast underwent major changes in 1888 as new regions – Rostov-on-Don, Azov and Taganrog – were now included in it. Moreover, the region’s territorial division was also revised, and this did not allow us to use statistics on individual districts. A solution for this problem was offered by the materials of the commission headed by Lieutenant-General N.A. Maslakovets, which investigated the causes of impoverishment of Don Cossacks in 1899. In the process, the commission collected detailed data on primary education in the Cossack community (Protokoly, 1899: 251-262). On the other hand, before 1880, when parochial and literacy schools first began to open in the Don Host Oblast, local statistical figures separately indicated the number of students and students in Cossack villages (stanitsas) and peasant schools. So, this enabled us to compare the statistical indicators we are interested in for 1880 and 1890, but exclusively for the Cossack population of the region. Considering this, we decided to limit the scope of our research in the paper, and only deliver the systematized material on primary education in the Cossack community.

Although technically, even with this restriction, the data we used was not quite comparable. We know how many children attended stanitsa schools for the most of the 19th century. However, we have precise information that the schools taught not only Cossacks but children from other estates as well although their number was insignificant (for example, in early 1860, 7 serf peasants, a few dozens of clergy and merchant children took a training course there) (Krasnov, 1863: 401-403). On the other hand, a part of Cossacks could study in rural schools. Reviewing the year of 1890, we, on the contrary, knew how many Cossacks studied in primary and secondary schools, but

we have no data what proportion of them received education outside stanitsas. In any case, the number of students in primary schools specified in official statistics was approximate. In 1896, a contemporary gave the following description of the situation in Don rural schools: “In September, the school accepted 12, in October – 15 and in November – 24 students, more students were also brought in December and in January, but 20 students stopped going to school from mid-March, and another 15 in April” (Po voprosu..., 1896: 4). It is obvious that in this context the number of students reflected in the documents depended to the great extent on the counting method. Moreover, throughout the 19th century, Don officials and scholars complained at the outrageous inaccuracy of absolutely any official numerical data. Here is what K.A. Kartushin, an employee at stanitsa boards of the Ust-Medveditsky district, wrote about this: “Data is not collected based on any rational program but often fabricated to only show modifications in the data already available at hand and of the same value and origin” (Protokoly, 1899: 156). For this reason, the inaccuracy and crudeness of information we provide here would be inevitable even if the borders of the Don Host Oblast remained the same, and we had homogeneous material regarding the number of students in stanitsa primary and secondary schools or on the number of Cossacks who received primary education over one hundred years. And yet this does not downgrade the statistics we systematized. In 1902, the head of the Main Directorate of the Cossack Hosts, P.O. Shcherbov-Nefedovich, when found himself in a similar situation, wrote to the Minister of War in the preamble to the document prepared by him: “Some of the statistical tables enclosed in this report should only be considered approximately correct” (RGVIA. F. 330. Op. 61. D. 1861. L. 30b). The same refers to the diagrams that we created as they contain only rough figures but reflect general trends in the progression of Don education, and although with inaccuracies in Don statistics, specific numerical values can vary greatly in them from the actual ones, in most cases variances in these values by 10-20 % will not affect the general trends and patterns we have identified.

Speaking of the materials that constituted the basis of our paper, in this case, we preferred to use, if possible, testimonies and accounts of people related to Don education, rather archival sources. The fact is that most of these people (for example, S.F. Nomikosov, S.S. Robush, Kh.I. Popov) often tried to explain the data quoted by providing important information and valuable insights. Since the information is often unknown even in the scholarly community, and some of the texts on Don education, published in the late 19th century, are not analyzed or relied on by researches, we will extensively leverage from the historical descriptive method. The methods of historical comparison and historical systematization will be instrumental in drawing general conclusions and summaries on the trends in the development of the Don education.

3. Discussion and results

A Don region expert of the early twentieth century, A.A. Kirillov, who remains to this day one of the leading authorities on the history of the Don education, noted that first experiments to establish a centralized school system on the Don had been made since the middle of the 18th century. According to his accounts, the Cherkassk administration tried twice (in 1747-1758 and in 1766-1779) to open a seminary to train educated priests at the time, and in 1765, Ataman S.D. Efremov even ordered “to found public secondary schools in Cossack villages to educate children” (Kirillov, b.g.: 3).

However, such initiatives were blocked by Cossacks’ passive attitude and their indifference to knowledge. Another Don region expert of the early twentieth century, Kh.I. Popov, published a Host document in 1785, which described the view of a part of senior Cossacks on education: “The parents themselves do not care in the least to ensure a safe existence and good welfare for their little children for the rest of their lives on this side, because sciences, by enlightening one's reason, purifies it of the rudeness that a person without good education is usually infected with; all those who are accustomed to talk about school training as a useless exercise that cannot ever be of any need, raise their children in idleness from young years instead of giving them education” (Popov, 1905: 134). Meanwhile, the Host authorities at least wanted to provide stanitsas with good clerks to do proper bookkeeping, and to this end Don Ataman A.I. Ilovaysky personally ordained to announce at stanitsa assemblies that if parents decided to teach their children how to write, then by doing this they “by right will oblige us to be grateful to them all their life” (Popov, 1905: 134-135). He even proposed to find “decent and capable teachers” in stanitsas so that children could

learn efficiently from them (Popov, 1905: 135). However, of the nine stanitsas that responded to this document, which Kh.I. Popov was lucky to uncover, five informed that “there were no people willing to teach their children to write” (Popov, 1905: 136).

Initially, the authorities’ persistent intent to arrange an education system in the Don region was supported only by individual priests and officers. Thanks to them, private schools began to operate in Don stanitsas even before first official public schools were opened. A.A. Kirillov reports on one of the very first such schools: he cites a document of 1770, which contained a permission given to an Aksai priest, Fr. Vasily Petrov (Vlasov) “to build a school house in a decent place near a church” in order to “teach children writing, reading books, and church singing, and God’s commandments, and how to live a modest and virtuous life” (Kirillov, b.g.: 7-8). A.I. Ilovaysky in the letter, published by Kh.I. Popov, mentions a school in the Kletskaya stanitsa where “Father Aleksandr Dmitriev teaches children successfully both word and cursive writing” (Popov, 1905: 135). At least as early as from the beginning of the 19th century, Cossack officers started similar schools to train their children, and the teacher staff at the schools was no longer employed from the clergy, but from common people. A well-known Don military officer, General I.I. Krasnov wrote about his childhood before the Patriotic War of 1812: “Grandfather (Major General I.K. Krasnov) gathered around him all his grandchildren whom at the time had up to fifteen people of both sexes and different ages from a son and two daughters. <...>. Five of the boys were fit for studying; grandfather added the same number of children of his relatives to them, and, thus, created an in-home boarding school that had about a dozen students. At first our teacher was a young Cossack of the Bukanovskaya stanitsa, Avilov; and then one of our elder brothers, who had finished an educational course at the Richelieu Lyceum, came from Odessa” (Vospominaniya..., 1873: 265-366).

Consequently, first official public schools were launched on the Don only between the 1790s and 1800s and not because the government paid no attention to education before. On the contrary, we can see a certain symbolic meaning in the fact that the first serious educational institution, a primary public school in Novocherkassk, was opened in 1791, at the end of the Ataman term of A.I. Ilovaysky, who contributed much energy to promote education in the Don region (Kirillov, 1905: 6). Later, this school was reorganized from a primary facility into a secondary one, and subsequently, into a gymnasium; but it is more important to point out that by running the school, the host authorities gained experience of managing a primary educational institution. As a result, in 1800, similar primary public schools were opened in other districts as well (Kirillov, 1905: 13-15). Beginning in 1799, the authorities kept statistics on Don schools, which indicated the rapid growth in the number of schools and children studying in them. According to A.A. Kirillov, in 1799 the only official Don school (Secondary Public School) had 120 students, while in 1805 6 schools (Cherkasskoe, Ust-Medveditskoe, Nizhne-Chirskoe, Machikhskoe, Alekseevskoe and Aksayskoe) taught 490 children (Kirillov, b.g.: 10). We can see that the number of people receiving primary education increased by 4 times in five years, and the number of educational institutions providing this service grew by 6 times!

However, education progressed very inconsistently on the Don, and the boom before the Patriotic War of 1812 was followed by a stagnation period. In 1819, according to the Host Office, despite the statutory requirement that stipulated to have “one uezd school in each uezd” and “a parish school per one or two parishes”, there were only 4 uezd schools in the Don Host Oblast (the ones we know of based on the data as of 1805 – Cherkasskoe one, which was, however, relocated to Novocherkassk (Cherkassky district), Nizhne-Chirskoe one (2nd Donskoy district) and Ust-Medveditskoe one (Ust-Medveditsky district), as well as Kochetovskoe one opened later (Khopersky district); 2 schools with rather an unclear “uezd-style” status (Aksayskoe one (Cherkassky district) and the new Kamenskoe one (Donetsky district), familiar to us) and 3 parish schools (new Kachalinskoe one and Ilovlinskoe one (2nd Donskoy district) and Machikhskoe one familiar to us, also known as Mikhailovskoe one (Khopersky district) (Kirillov, 1907: 156). Compilers of the list somehow omitted the Alekseevskoe school that was opened in 1803 as the uezd school of the Khopersky district, which was also reported by A.A. Kirillov (Kirillov, b.g.: 9). However, the sheet of the Host’s expenditures for 1819, has an entry on 1860 rubles that were provided to launch the Alekseevskoe uezd school, so we can obviously suggest that it continued to exist, but the statistics on the Don, as we noted above, was kept in a very careless manner (Kirillov, 1905: 160). In any case, according to official records, the overall number of students in all the schools was not higher than 571 people (Kirillov, 1905: 156). In sum, since 1805, in fifteen years,

the number of schools almost doubled (6 vs. 10), but the number of students only showed an insignificant growth – from 490 to 571 children.

The director at the Novocherkassk gymnasium, S.S. Robush wrote in the early 1860 that prior to the introduction of the “Regulation on the management of the Don Host” in 1835, 13 schools were opened in total on the Don (8 uezd and “uezd-style” facilities and 5 parish facilities), 2 of which were closed down in 1820 (Mikhailovskoe and Ilovlinskoe parish schools, due to finding shortage) (Robush, 1867: 119). He also gives the earliest available statistical figures on students by school type, which we should note, is somewhat different from the one provided by A.A. Kirillov. Considering the fact that he covered the period from 1805 to 1860, we decided to utilize his data in the diagram below as basic figures and extend them with information supplied by A.A. Kirillov for 1799.

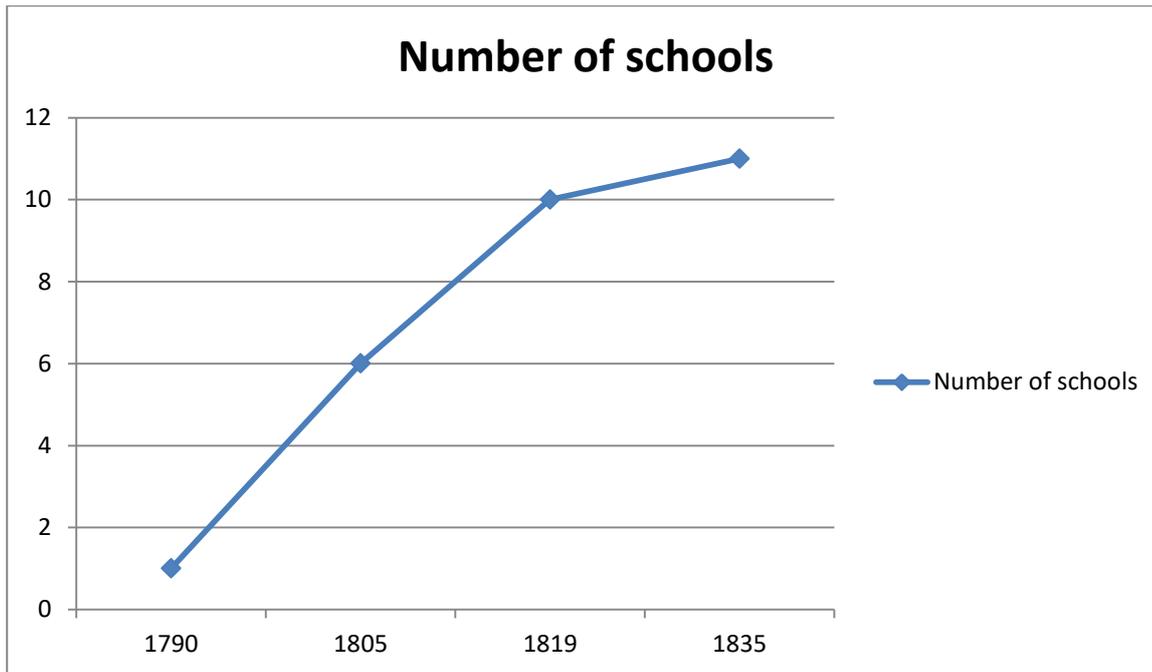


Fig. 1. Dynamics of the number of Cossack schools in the Don Host Oblast. 1799-1835
Sources: Kirillov, b.g.: 10; Robush, 1867: 119

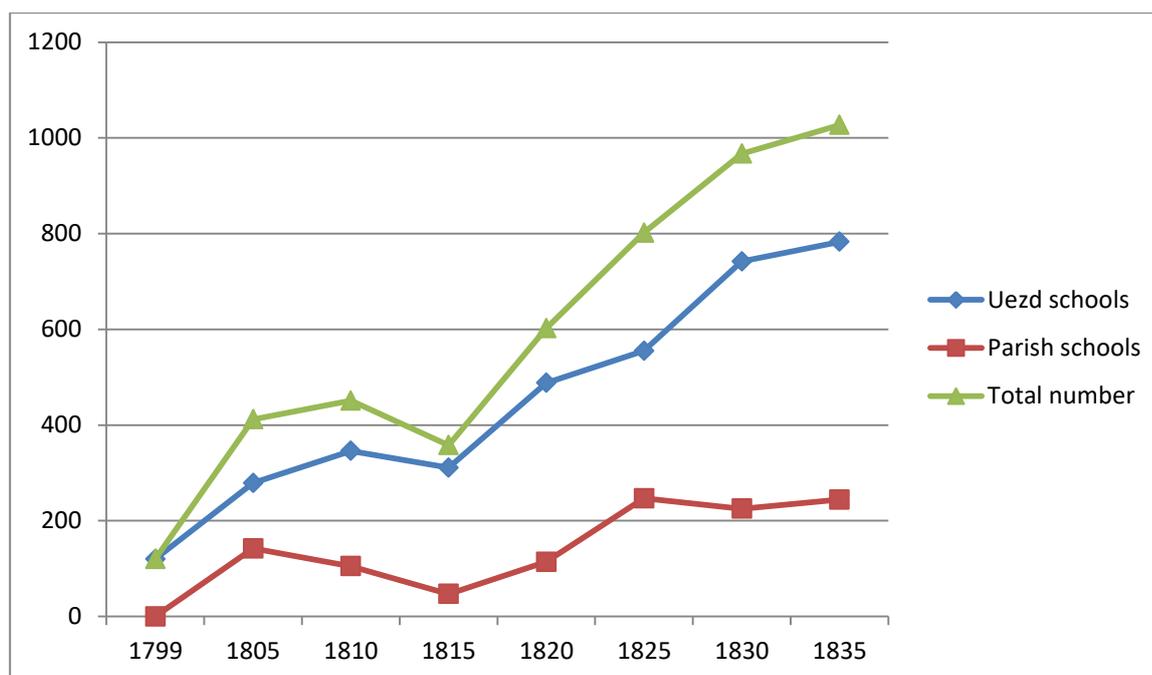


Fig. 2. Dynamics of the number of students in Cossack schools in the Don Host Oblast. 1799-1835
Sources: Kirillov, b.g.: 10; Robush, 1867: 119

These diagrams illustrate that in the future, the 1799-1805 growth rate for the number of students remained unachievable for the Don Host. We can assume that the educational services market was completely saturated with offerings by 1810. Another evidence of the suggestion is that after 1820 the number of Don schools was stable, and two of them shut down in the period from 1820 to 1835. As we can see, only uezd and “uezd-style” schools consistently increased their enrolments, while parish schools often experienced five year periods when the number of students went down. A particularly slow growth rate of the number of students is recorded in 1805-1815, and the fact, of course, should be attributed to the Napoleonic wars. And then, following a brief upsurge in 1815-1820, when those who could not study in the past five years, obviously, went to school, the growth rate not simply stabilized, but began to slow down in relative numerical terms.

The situation relapsed to the conditions that existed before 1790. Those segments of the Cossack population who wanted to receive an education, did it in the already existing schools, and that ensured only a slight increase in the number of students. Any attempts to create new parish schools encountered resistance of the local population that did not understand why school were needed. S.S. Robush gives the two most flagrant cases of the kind. In 1834, the Kazanskaya stanitsa decided to open a school, but already in the next year, in 1835, the facility was liquidated and apparently even did not have time to appear in general statistics (Robush, 1867: 123). “One Cossack who had the authority at the stanitsa assembly was offended by his son who studied at the school; the angry father set the whole stanitsa against the school so that the village refused to provide funding for the school” (Robush, 1867: 123). In the Melekhovskaya stanitsa, a school was already approved in 1836 by the authorities; however, the Cossacks unwillingness to study reached the level at which it was impossible to convince the stanitsa administration to find a house for the school, despite the efforts of “the teacher assigned to this stanitsa honestly tried to gather students privately in his apartment, but no matter how hard he struggled to achieve it, had no students (Robush, 1867: 123). S.S. Robush believed that such cases were linked with very strong rumors circulating in the Cossack environment that children would be sent to cantonists after school. Robush was personally contacted by the mother of a Cossack in the 1860s, who asked: “Well, Sir, will they not take our children to cantonists after they teach them?” (Robush, 1867: 124).

And, we should say, despite all its ambiguity, the “Regulation on the management of the Don Host” of 1835 took quite practicable steps to handle this problem. It was decided to dramatically increase the number of primary parish schools in stanitsas: according to the document, as many as

19 parish schools were to function in the Don region, but only 7 district (former uezd) schools (Robush, 1867: 120)! Based on this, the total number of schools suddenly soared from 11 to 26. More importantly, the reach of education extended geographically to increasingly cover localities farther away from the Host's administrative centers.

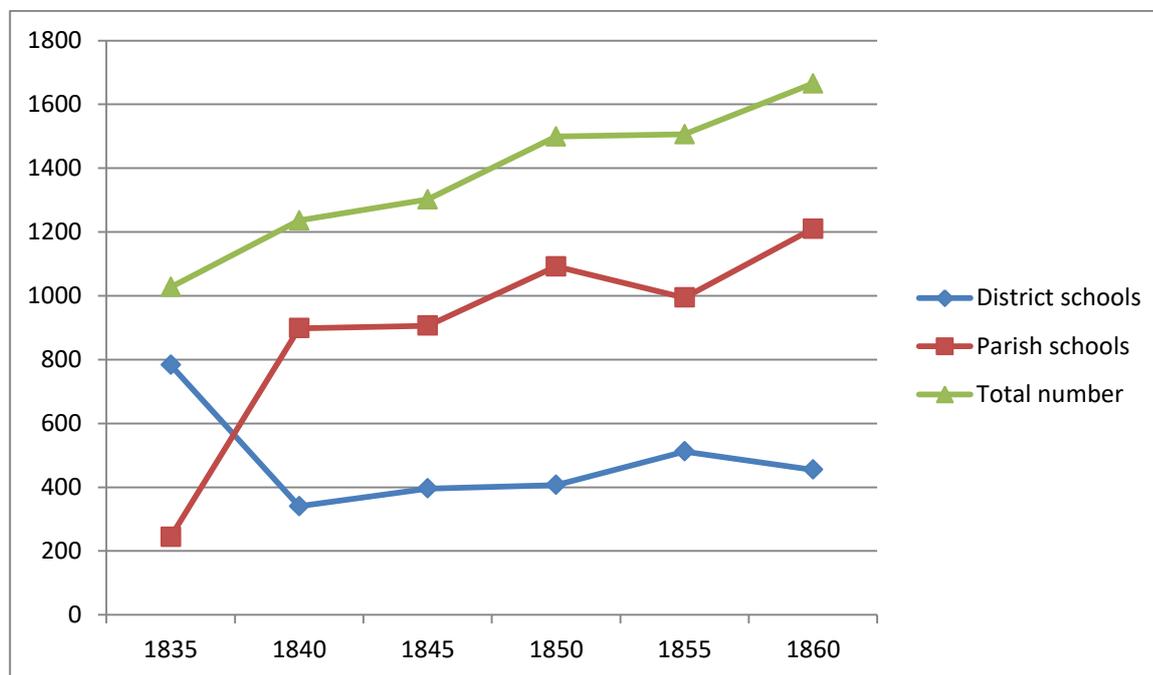


Fig. 3. Dynamics of the number of students in Cossack schools in the Don Host Oblast. 1835-1860
Source: Robush, 1867: 120.

As we can see, the implemented reforms led to a complete transformation in the student structure in the Don primary education, but they had almost no impact on the growth rates of their numbers. However, now the education development was slowed down by the authorities rather than by Cossacks themselves. In fact, only one new school was opened in the Don region from 1839 to 1859, located in the Kalmyk nomadic territory (Robush, 1867: 120). It seemed that the issue was not even in a tedious bureaucratic procedure to coordinate the launch of new schools, but in the general policy pursued at the time. In particular, Minister of War of the Russian Empire A.I. Chernyshev gave the new Don Ataman M.G. Vlasov this advice in 1836: “You already have a lot of scientists and scholars, you do not want to have any more, but you should strive for more old goodness and old-time simplicity” (Volvenko, 2015: 108-109). We should say that M.G. Vlasov was by no means a passive bearer of the imperial will – he formally executed the orders of his superiors and submitted almost no requests to opening new schools, but meanwhile he facilitated the work of already existing ones and founded new parish schools as soon as possible, until 1839, as it was set forth by the “Regulation on the management of the Don Host” (Robush, 1867: 120). A confidant of the Ataman, A.P. Chebotarev, described the position of his supervisor towards Nicholas I in general as a kind of masquerade: “With the utmost tact, he assumed an aspect of an unsophisticated old man who should be forgiven for anything that is incongruous with modern requirements, because he is a man of the past century. *He knew how to present himself in such a way that society was confident in his full readiness to encourage any academic progress in the region and all kinds of progressive action in it* (italics added by me)” (Chebotarev, 1875: 221-222). And as a result, the ataman term of M.G. Vlasov (1836-1848), as well as the one of his supporter, M.G. Khomutov (1848-1862), resembled in some way the time of the ataman term of A.I. Ilovaysky in the late 18th century – despite seeming stagnation in education, in the depths of Don society, a true explosion matured prepared by outwardly inconspicuous work in stanitsas.

And again this explosion occurred at the end of the administrative term of the old ataman who did much to develop education on the Don. S.S. Robush believed that the first visible sign of

the change in Cossacks' attitude to education was the initiative put forward by a common Cossack of the Mechetinskaya stanitsa, a certain "Chernikov", who "imbued with noble motives to be useful to his society, decided to open a parish school in 1858 at his own expense (Robush, 1867: 122). Unfortunately, the praiseworthy initiative fell at bureaucratic hurdles, and the correspondence with St. Petersburg concerning a new parish school dragged on for several years (Robush, 1867: 122). And in 1860, M.G. Khomutov stepped forward with a proposal to the imperial authorities, which was revolutionary for the Don education and at the same time was in line with the spirit of the new era. He petitioned to grant "permission to establish male and female schools in all stanitsas and populous settlements" (Krasnov, 1863: 403). This actually meant that now schools were allowed to open in any stanitsa that was ready to support them, and the opening should only be approved by a decision of the Host ataman without a corresponding request to St. Petersburg (Robush, 1867: 122). Regarding further developments in the Don education, Chief of Staff of the Don Host A.M. Dondukov-Korsakov wrote the following: "The nobility and Cossack communities in stanitsas repeatedly express their aspirations in this respect and eagerly wait for their justified hopes to become reality. <...>. Stanitsas, lacking educational facilities, resolve to allocate the donations of their citizens with the only request to open schools at their localities" (Karasev, 1896: 580).

S.S. Robush, who received such resolutions to open new schools, preserved some of them for history. Based on these resolutions, we may conclude that by the end of 1850, a substantial share of Cossacks in each Don Host stanitsa wished to give education to their children, but this intention was hampered by the scarcity of schools and large geographical distances between them. The clearest written account of the situation was given by inhabitants of the Pravotorovskaya stanitsa: "As educational institutions are located in remote areas, and especially with frequent harvests and high rental prices for apartments in the places, we cannot send our children to parish schools in other stanitsas; if we had such one in our stanitsa, each of us would be glad to give their child to studies" (Robush, 1867: 126). Other resolutions evidence how Cossacks tried to do without official schools, and why they were not content with the existing palliatives. For example, the Esaulovskaya stanitsa ran a "non-paid school" where teachers were local priests, but local inhabitants complained that such impromptu educators were "always busy performing occasional religious rites and obligations put on them", and therefore "in order to introduce youth into studies, it is in truth necessary that schools are established by the government" (Robush, 1867: 126). In the Raspopinskaya stanitsa, local people were exasperated that although they hired private teachers, the latter were "semi-literate themselves", and for this reason it was necessary to found a real school, and the authorities were to send a person there "who knows well the Law of God, sacred and Russian history, arithmetic, grammar and geometry" (Robush, 1867: 126).

And, as S.S. Robush noted, he was committed to satisfy such requests to the best of his capabilities. Already in 1861, 17 schools were opened in stanitsas; in 1862 – 13 male and 2 female schools; in 1863 – 11 male and 6 female ones; in 1864 – 8 male and 4 female ones (Robush, 1867: 129-130). Further on, however, the situation was reversed by the already specified trend of uneven development of the Don education, and the growth in the number of schools rapidly slowed down: in 1865, only 8 male schools were opened, and in 1866 – 1 female and 2 male ones (Robush, 1867: 130). However, the figures, provided by S.S. Robush, on new schools, opened between 1861 and 1866, did not correspond to his own data on the number of schools on the Don at the end of 1850 and 1866. Proceeding from the information, as well as from the reference materials in "The memorial book of the Don Host Oblast" (Pamyatnaya knizhka Oblasti Voiska Donskogo na 1873 g), the quantitative indicators for the Cossack primary education on the Don in 1860 grew as follows.

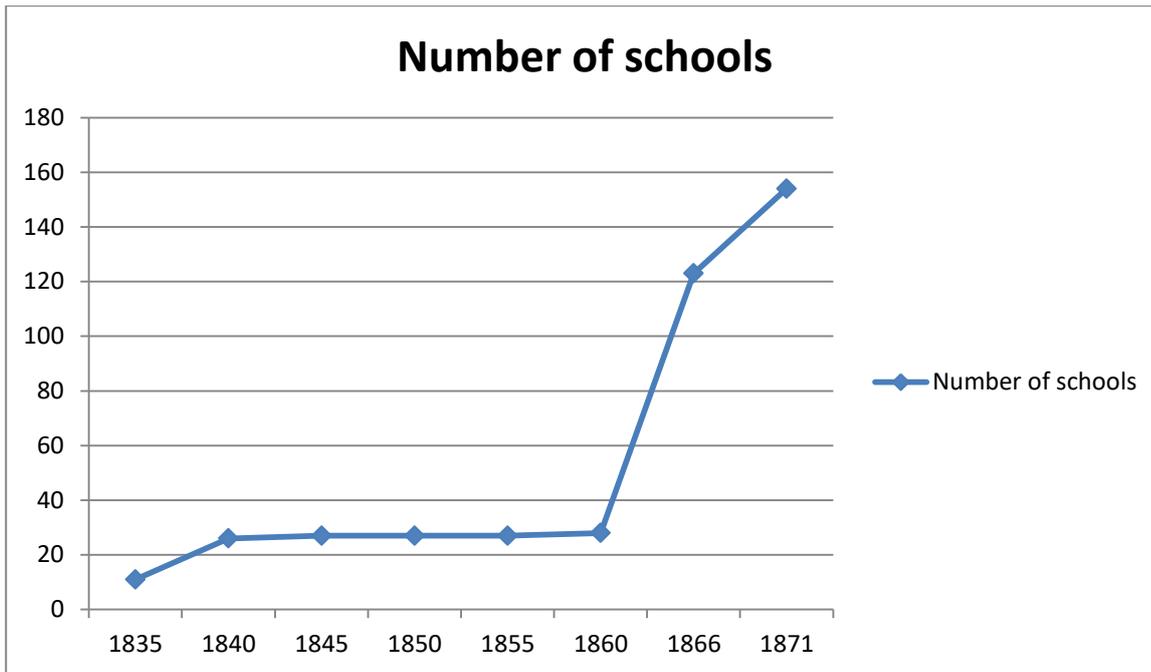


Fig. 4. Dynamics of the number of Cossack schools in the Don Host Oblast. 1835-1871
Sources: [Robush, 1867: 119-131](#); [Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1873: 69](#)

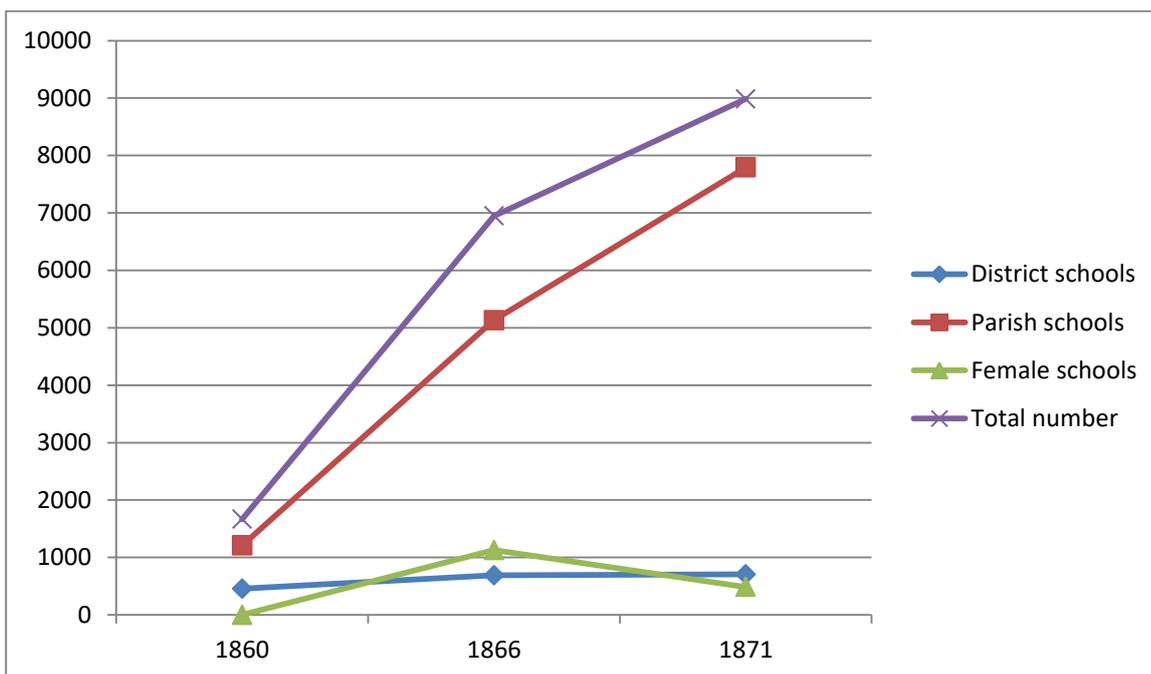


Fig. 5. Dynamics of the number of students in Cossack schools in the Don Host Oblast. 1860-1871
Sources: Sources: [Robush, 1867: 119-131](#); [Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1873: 69](#)

The diagrams show that the effect of the leap forward made by the Don education began to gradually fade as early in the second half of 1860. The slowdown cannot be linked to any external factor such as the Napoleonic wars or reactionary government policies. This simply meant that the energy dissipated, generated in 1830-1850, when the Don Atamans, M.G. Vlasov and M.G. Khomutov, being unable to open new schools, made their best to promote the very idea of education among Cossacks, by leveraging parish schools, a resource granted to them by the “Regulation on the management of the Don Host” of 1835. Evidently, it is the parish schools that

formed the basis for widespread literacy as district schools had fewer students even in 1870 (vs 1835). This was obviously explained by the fact that Cossacks preferred to send their children to local schools, according to the inhabitants of the Pravotorovskaya stanitsa, and therefore capabilities of district schools to enroll new students were limited. Special female schools, which emerged in 1860, also did not play a decisive role, and the number of female students in them was far smaller than in parish schools. We should mention separately that it was not until 1860 that literacy moved beyond the Cossack community to reach peasants – while there were only 7 students in parish schools in 1860 for 300,000 Don serfs (Krasnov, 1863: 403), by 1866, 55 dedicated rural schools had been opened, although the quality of teaching there was beneath any criticism, and there was even no accurate information on the number of students there (Robush, 1867: 132).

A dramatic increase in Cossack schools, in principle, required more teachers. However, dealing with the issue, M.G. Khomutov and S.S. Robush demonstrated rare far-sightedness, implying that they made early preparations to file a petition to “permit to establish male and female schools in all stanitsas and populous settlements.” Even before filing the petition, preparations set off in 1859 to open a specialized pedagogical department at the Novocherkassk gymnasium which would deliver a year course for future school teachers (Artinskii, 1907: 180-181). As a result, when new parish schools were to be launched in 1861, 7 out of 17 were successfully staffed with graduates of the department (Artinskii, 1907: 182). Consequently, a rapid increase in the number of educational facilities in Cossack stanitsas in 1860, in contrast with peasant settlements, did not mean a deteriorating professional level of the teaching personnel in them, but on the contrary, these schools received certified teachers for the first time.

Eventually, while in 1860, in the Don region, one student accounted for 321 Don inhabitants of both genders, which was the second to last indicator among provinces and regions in European Russia, (Krasnov, 1863: 402), by 1870 one student already accounted for 78 inhabitants (Nomikosov, 1884: 578)! Hence, it was in 1870 when a contemporary statistician managed to measure the proportion of students among the total number of children for the first time. According to the calculations of the above S.F. Nomikosov, by the time, 11.2 % of boys and more than 2% of girls studied in the official educational institutions (Nomikosov, 1884: 579). It is not surprising that 1870 saw the idea taking shape of the possibility to introduce universal primary education in the Don Host Oblast, at least in the long term. Nevertheless, the same S.F. Nomikosov took efforts in the early 1880s to prove the futility of the vision, arguing that there were no funds required to correspondingly “increase the number of schools” (Nomikosov, 1884: 579).

4. Conclusion

If we look at the relative growth rate, we will see that each of the periods in the Don education development in the 19th century consisted of several stages, with periods of stagnation followed by the rapid growth in primary schools and students. Below we will try to provide a description of each of the stages.

1) 1799–1805. This time brings about the launch of first schools outside Cherkassk, and the event was facilitated by the activities to spread literacy rolled out by enthusiastic priests and policies of the Don atamans in the 18th century. Although the number of Cossacks wishing to study in the early 19th century seemed not to be too big, there were already enough of them to ensure the normal functioning of schools, at least in large administrative centers. Considering this, it is clear why *uezd* and “*uezd-style*” schools become the main type of primary school at the time. The number of schools and pupils increase by several times, but the increase is insignificant in absolute figures – we speak about the opening of individual schools and several hundred students in them.

2) 1805–1815. New schools continue to be started, but the number of students goes down (a unique situation for the period under review). Logically, the situation was pre-determined by the Napoleonic wars when a significant part of the male population was conscripted.

3) 1815–1835. The first period of relative stagnation in the Don education. Almost no educational institutions open, and the number of students grows by 100–200 people over the five-year period, and this is slower even in absolute terms as compared with the 1799–1805 period. Moreover, the growth rate slows down every five years, and we can speak of a visible crisis in primary schooling. Apparently, the crisis gradually developed as *uezd* schools depleted its

capabilities. It was inconvenient for most Cossacks to take their children to study in remote administrative centers, parochial schools were scarce, and the number of students was insignificant there. Although the authorities did not object to the opening of such schools, there were practically no community initiatives to this end; sometimes the new schools had to close as Cossacks were unwilling to support them.

4) 1835–1839. This period marked a sharp increase in the number of parish schools initiated from the top, and they became the main educational institutions of primary education for the Don Host. Although the number of students indicated only a slight growth, the period created prerequisites for its further improvement.

5) 1839–1861. For the first time in the history of the Don education, stagnation resulted from the wrong policy of the imperial government. Cossacks demonstrated a stronger desire to study, but very few schools were opened, first because of the policy on Don Cossacks, pursued by Nicholas I, and later because of the bureaucratic complexity that made it very difficult to establish new schools. At the same time, Don Atamans M.G. Vlasov and M. G. Khomutov seemed to sympathize with the idea of enlightenment, and created the foundation to further accelerate the development of primary education. In particular, as early as in 1859, they raise the issue of teacher training for future schools, and in 1860, M.G. Vlasov petitioned to grand “permission to establish male and female schools in all stanitsas and populous settlements”.

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