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## **Revisiting the Evolution of the System of Higher Education in the Russian Empire in 1830–1916**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the evolution of the system of higher education in the Russian Empire in 1830–1916. It gives consideration to the classification and typology of such educational institutions.

The study's findings revealed that in the first third of the 19th century the Russian higher education sector mainly relied on two types of educational institution – classical universities and lyceums. By 1830, Russia had 11 institutions of higher learning. In the mid-19th century, classical universities continued to lead the way. There was a decline in the number of lyceums. It is in this period that The Main Pedagogical Institute emerged. By 1869, there had emerged the first veterinary institutes in Russia and its first private institution of higher learning, with the number of educational institutions in the sector reaching 13.

By 1890, Russia now had 25 institutions of higher learning, with these including universities, lyceums, and veterinary institutes. This period saw the emergence there of higher vocational education institutions, institutes of history and philology, the country's first institute of Oriental languages, and its first female institution of higher learning, with the number of private educational institutions there increasing fourfold.

By 1910, the number institutions of higher learning in Russia had increased by 10. This was the result of the opening of a classical university, a veterinary institute, four higher vocational education institutions, an institute of foreign languages, a private educational institution, and two female schools. Six years later, on the eve of the February Revolution, the country saw the establishment of another 20 institutions of higher learning, with 16 of these being a private educational institution, three – a higher vocational education institution, and one – a folk high school. Thus, during the period under review the Ministry of Public Education had under its purview an entire network of educational institutions of varying types, with the combined number of these reaching 55 in 1916.

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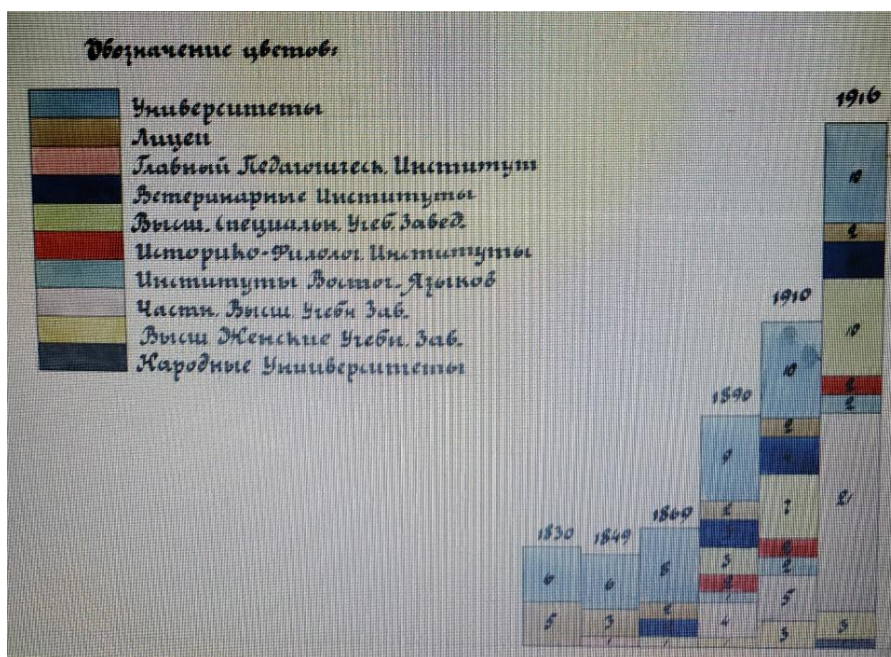
**Keywords:** Russian Empire, network of institutions of higher learning, period 1830–1916, Ministry of Public Education.

### 1. Introduction

When most think of the system of higher education in the Russian Empire, Russian imperial universities are probably the first thing that comes to mind. Yet, in actual fact, the country's system of higher education was a lot more complex and extensive than that. This work aims to consider only institutions of higher learning under the purview of the Ministry of Public Education in the Russian Empire in the entire imperial period up to 1916.

### 2. Materials and methods

The study's source base is derived from relevant documents from the Russian State Historical Archive (Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation), namely materials from Holding No. 733 ('Department of Public Education at the Ministry of Public Education'). There is a piece of material that the study introduces into the literature for the first time – a diagram illustrating the increase in the number of institutions of higher learning in the Russian Empire in the period from 1830 to 1916 (Figure 1).



**Fig. 1.** Diagram illustrating the increase in the number of institutions of higher learning in the Russian Empire in 1830–1916 (RGIA. F. 733. Op. 207. D. 42. L. 1).

Methodologically, the study relies on the following basic historical principles: historicism, systematicity, and objectivity. The use of these principles in conjunction with the statistical and chronological methods helped conduct a detailed analysis of the evolution of the system of higher education in the Russian Empire in the period 1830–1916 and draw meaningful conclusions.

### 3. Discussion

The historiography on the subject is vast and includes not only the historiography associated with the work of the Ministry of Public Education, which oversaw the operation of institutions of higher learning in the Russian Empire, but also that concerned with issues related to educational institutions of different types, the most famous of these being imperial classical universities. In addition, researchers have explored the operation of narrowly specialized educational institutions as well. Of particular note here are the work by Ye.A. Knyazev, which examines the development of the pedagogical school sector in the Russian Empire in the period between the 18th and 20th centuries (Knyazev, 2010), the one by A.V. Zyryanov, focused on the history of the making and development of commercial education in Russia in the imperial period (Zyryanov, 2012), the one by V.A. Zmeyev, which explores the management of higher education institutions in

Russia in the early 19th century (Zmeev, 2016), and the one by R.M. Allalyev and his colleagues, which addresses the pedagogical periodical press of the Ministry of Public Education (Allalyev et al., 2022).

The other relevant works that are worthy of note are the one by A.V. Tret'yakov, which examines the making of the agricultural education sector in Russia in the first half of the 19th century (Tret'yakov, 2023), the one by A.N. Kuksa, which explores the activity of folk high schools (Kuksa, 2022), the one by M.V. Gribovsky, which considers Russia's imperial universities as a factor in modernizing the country (Gribovskii, 2011), the one by Yu.A. Disson, focused on lyceums and university-based boarding schools in Russia in the period between the late 18th and the first third of the 19th centuries (Disson, 2007), the one by V.M. Avilov and his colleagues, devoted to the history of veterinary education (Avilov i dr., 2020), the one by A.V. Torkunov, which examines certain aspects of the history of Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages (Torkunov, 2015), the one by M.R. Yusupov, focused on the history of folk high schools in Russia (Yusupov, 2015), the one by O.V. Zhukov, devoted to the Bestuzhev Higher Women's Courses in Saint Petersburg (Zhukov, 2015), and the one by I.V. Bortashevich, focused on the similar educational institution in Moscow (Bortashevich, 2016).

#### **4. Results**

The first institution of higher learning in the Russian Empire, Imperial Moscow University, was established in 1755 (Cherkasov, 2023: 1685). As early as the very beginning of the 19th century, during the period of ministerial reforms, the country saw the establishment of as many as several new universities – Imperial Dorpat University (1802), Imperial Vilna University (1803), Imperial Kazan University (1804), and Imperial Kharkov University (1805) (Cherkasov, 2023: 1683-1694).

In addition, beginning in 1803, efforts were undertaken to establish institutions of higher learning such as lyceums. More specifically, in the first quarter of the 19th century, Russia saw the establishment of as many as five lyceums: Demidov Lyceum in 1803 in Yaroslavl, Alexander Lyceum in 1811 in Tsarskoye Selo (RGIA. F. 73. Op. 7. D. 607. L. 3), Richelieu Lyceum in 1817 in Odessa, Kremenets Lyceum in 1819 in Kremenets, Volyn Governorate, and Nezhin Lyceum in 1820 in Nezhin. In 1868, Imperial Katkov Lyceum was established in Moscow in memory of Tsesarevich Nicholas. These educational institutions fared differently. Kremenets Lyceum was in operation the shortest period of time, closing down in 1834 (its students had taken an active part in the Polish Insurrection). After being in operation for a little less than 50 years, Richelieu Lyceum was reorganized in 1865 as Imperial Novorossiia University. Nezhin Lyceum was in operation for 55 years. In 1875, it was reorganized as an institute of history and philology. Each of the remaining lyceums functioned until 1917.

By 1830, the Russian Empire had just two types of institution of higher learning under the purview of the Ministry of Public Education – universities and lyceums, the combined number being 11 (RGIA. F. 733. Op. 207. D. 42. L. 1).

By 1849, despite the opening of The Main Pedagogical Institute, the number of institutions of higher learning in Russia had reduced to 10 – as a result of Kremenets Lyceum closing down and another lyceum leaving the purview of the Ministry.

The first veterinary school in Russia was opened in 1848 in Dorpat. In 1873, it was transformed into Yur'yev Veterinary Institute. That same year, Kazan and Kharkov Institutes were established, and in 1889 Warsaw Veterinary Institute was opened (Avilov i dr., 2020: 91). Of note is the fact that Kharkov Institute was established as a consequence of the reorganization of Kharkov Veterinary School (established in 1851). On the other hand, Warsaw Institute was created as a result of the reorganization of Warsaw Veterinary School (established in 1884).

In 1867, Saint Petersburg became home to an institute of history and philology, with its primary focus being on training teachers for secondary education institutions. In 1875, a similar institute was reorganized as Nezhin Lyceum.

In 1869, Warsaw became home to another classical university in the Russian Empire – Imperial Warsaw University (Cherkasov, 2023: 1689).

An interesting niche among institutions of higher learning in the Russian Empire was occupied by institutes of Oriental languages. The country's first such school, Lazarev Institute, was established back in 1815 – as a gymnasium offering language courses in Arabic, Armenian, Persian, and Turkish (Torkunov, 2015: 9). In 1872, the institute was officially split into two departments. The first department continued to function as a gymnasium, and the second, which

offered a 3-year program of study, was focused on Oriental languages, as well as the history and culture of the Middle Eastern region.

In 1876, higher education also became accessible to women in Russia – thanks to the establishment of the Kazan Higher Women's Courses. Two years later, in 1878, similar educational institutions were established in Saint Petersburg (Bestuzhev Higher Women's Courses) and in Kiev (Zhukov, 2015: 98).

A special category of institutions of higher learning in the Russian Empire was private educational institutions. These numbered 15 in the period 1905–1912 and 21 by 1916 (RGIA. F. 733. Op. 207. D. 42. L. 1). Educational institutions of this kind were normally established with funds from the merchantry and trained specialists for the following sectors: commerce-and-industry, banking-and-insurance, cooperative, public, administrative, foreign trade, and some others.

Table 1 displays the data on the increase in the number of institutions of higher learning in the Russian Empire in 1830–1916.

**Table 1.** Institutions of higher learning under the purview of the Ministry of Public Education in the Russian Empire in 1830–1916 (RGIA. F. 733. Op. 207. D. 42. L. 1)

Type of educational institution	Year					
	1830	1849	1869	1890	1910	1916
University	6	6	8	9	10	10
Lyceum	5	3	2	2	2	2
Pedagogical institute	-	1	-	-	-	-
Veterinary institute	-	-	2	3	4	4
Higher vocational education institution	-	-	-	3	7	10
Institute of history and philology	-	-	-	2	2	2
Institute of Oriental languages	-	-	-	1	2	2
Private institution of higher learning	-	-	1	4	5	21
Higher female educational institution	-	-	-	1	3	3
Folk high school	-	-	-	-	-	1
Total	11	10	13	25	35	55

As evidenced in Table 1, in the early 19th century, the system of higher education developed in the Russian Empire mainly owing to the establishment of classical universities and lyceums. By the mid-19th century (1849), the sector had changed very little – there appearing The Main Pedagogical Institute and the number of lyceums decreasing by two. Thus, in the period from 1830 to 1849, institutions of higher learning in the Russian Empire exhibited a negative change in number, down from 11 to 10.

In 1869, the number of universities was up from six to eight; there also was an addition of two veterinary institutes and one private institution of higher learning. At the same time, the number of lyceums decreased from three to two. While including the two veterinary institutes, which at that time had the status of a veterinary school, in Table 1 under the year 1869 may raise some eyebrows, we cannot rule out the possibility that the schools were institutions of higher learning at the time already.

The next twenty-year period (up to 1880) was very productive for the system of higher education in Russia – the number of educational institutions almost doubled (from 13 to 25). The number of classical universities increased by one – to nine. The number of lyceums did not change. There now were three veterinary institutes. There appeared two institutes of history and philology and one institute of Oriental languages. The country's first three higher vocational education institutions were established. There was a sharp increase in the number of private institutions of higher learning (from one to four), and there also appeared the country's first female institution of higher learning. Once again, we are talking here about educational institutions under the purview of the Ministry of Public Education exclusively.

In 1910, the number of institutions of higher learning in the Russian Empire was now 35. The following educational institutions were added to the list: one classical university, one veterinary institute, four higher vocational education institutions, one private educational institution, and two higher female institutions.

Finally, in 1916 the number of educational institutions was up by 20 on 1910, with the growth on average being more than three institutions a year. The largest part of this growth was accounted for by private institutions of higher learning, their number increasing by 16. An increase was also exhibited by higher vocational education institutions (plus three institutions), and for the first time did the Ministry of Public Education have a folk high school under its purview.

## 5. Conclusion

In the first third of the 19th century the Russian higher education sector mainly relied on two types of educational institution – classical universities and lyceums. By 1830, Russia had 11 institutions of higher learning. In the mid-19th century, classical universities continued to lead the way. There was a decline in the number of lyceums. It is in this period that The Main Pedagogical Institute emerged. By 1869, there had emerged the first veterinary institutes in Russia and its first private institution of higher learning, with the number of educational institutions in the sector reaching 13.

By 1890, Russia now had 25 institutions of higher learning, with these including universities, lyceums, and veterinary institutes. This period saw the emergence there of higher vocational education institutions, institutes of history and philology, the country's first institute of Oriental languages, and its first female institution of higher learning, with the number of private educational institutions there increasing fourfold.

By 1910, the number institutions of higher learning in Russia had increased by 10. This was the result of the opening of a classical university, a veterinary institute, four higher vocational education institutions, an institute of foreign languages, a private educational institution, and two female schools. Six years later, on the eve of the February Revolution, the country saw the establishment of another 20 institutions of higher learning, with 16 of these being a private educational institution, three – a higher vocational education institution, and one – a folk high school. Thus, during the period under review the Ministry of Public Education had under its purview an entire network of educational institutions of varying types, with the combined number of these reaching 55 in 1916.

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