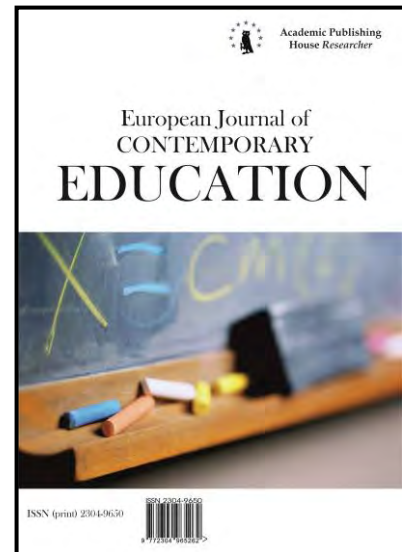




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The History of Education

Educational Institutions under the Ecclesiastical Department in the Russian Empire (1860–1917): A Historical-Statistical Study

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Abstract

This paper examines the process of the making and development of parochial schools in Russia in the pre-revolutionary period. An insight is provided into the scale of work carried out in that area, the evolution of parochial schools in Russia, and the regulatory framework for them. The main sources for this paper are reports from the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod – more specifically, annual data from ‘Extracts from the Report on the Department of the Orthodox Faith’ and ‘The Most Faithful Report of the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod’. The authors employed the following methodological principles: those of historicism, systemicity, and objectivity. It is using a combination of these principles that it was possible to build a coherent picture of the development of said educational system in the Russian Empire in the period 1860–1917. The work employed the chronological principle and utilized a large body of statistical information. The use of the statistical method helped explore dynamics regarding the number of educational institutions under the Ecclesiastical Department and the size of their student body (including their student

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gender balance) and establish the average number of students per educational institution under the Ecclesiastical Department.

The authors' conclusion is that in the period 1860–1917 the system of educational institutions under the Ecclesiastical Department went through two major periods of active development (one subsequent to the abolition of serfdom and the other subsequent to the adoption of The Rules for Parochial Schools) and one major period of stagnation (in the 1870s). Throughout said period, the educational system under the Ecclesiastical Department kept developing, with its schools getting bigger and grammar schools undergoing reorganization and the number of students per school within it growing continually. By 1914, the number of students enrolled in schools under the Ecclesiastical Department surpassed two million, which constituted nearly 25 % of all students in the Russian Empire. At the peak of its development, the school system under the Ecclesiastical Department was terminated in 1917, with the schools placed under the purview of the Ministry of Public Education.

Keywords: parochial schools, Holy Synod, Russian Empire.

1. Introduction

The Russian Empire has in its history many vibrant pages that over time have become faded, **many due to misconstruction, turning virtually into “blank spots”**. A good example is the history of the development of parochial schools in Russia in the pre-revolutionary period. In both Soviet and contemporary, Russian, historiographies, the **nation's parochial schools have had all kinds of labels** pinned on them. The research reported in this paper offers an insight into the system of parochial education in Russia, with the primary focus on investigating the scale of work carried out in that area in the pre-revolutionary period.

2. Materials and methods

The main sources for this paper are reports from the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod – **more specifically, annual data from ‘Extracts from the Report on the Department of the Orthodox Faith’ and ‘The Most Faithful Report of the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod’**. These annual reports contain virtually no information on parochial schools in the period 1836–1859. There are significant gaps in information for subsequent years too. For instance, there are information gaps in reports for the period 1888–1893. As regards the period 1860–1917, it is worth noting that prior to 1898 virtually no detailed data on educational institutions under the Ecclesiastical Department were published, with the only exception being the year 1887, while the number of teaching staff was covered only starting in 1900. Nevertheless, these reports are quite a valuable source on the history of educational institutions under the Ecclesiastical Department in the Russian Empire.

The authors employed the following methodological principles: those of historicism, systemicity, and objectivity. It is using a combination of these principles that it was possible to build a coherent picture of the development of said educational system in the Russian Empire in the period 1860–1917. The work employed the chronological principle and utilized a large body of statistical information. The use of the statistical method helped explore dynamics regarding the number of educational institutions under the Ecclesiastical Department and the size of their student body (including their student gender balance) and establish the average number of students per educational institution under the Ecclesiastical Department.

3. Results

The history of Russia's **parochial school system appears to be as deep as the history of Russia** itself, as the first parochial schools emerged in Russia back in the period of the Baptism of Russia. Schools of this kind were established at monasteries and churches and were intended for both sexes. As early as under Prince Yaroslav the Wise, Kiev became home to female schools where girls could not only study reading, writing, and arithmetic but acquire some special knowledge as well (e.g., the skills of sewing). The role of church education is attested by numerous documents. For instance, issues of primary education in the Russian Empire were addressed in the Book of One Hundred Chapters, a collection of decisions of the Russian Church Council of 1551 ([Proekt polozheniya, 1883: 47](#)).

Just like in Europe, up until the late 18th century church education remained in Russia the main type of primary education. However, on November 5, 1804, along with the University Statute

the government issued the Statute on Secondary and Primary Educational Institutions, which was to regulate the activity of schools in the Russian Empire, including parish schools (PSZRI, 1804–1805: 569-607).

Despite the adoption of the above statute, the Russian Empire hardly witnessed any considerable development of its parochial school system. This was associated with a number of reasons, including economic ones. Specifically, in 1825, according to a report from the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod, the Russian Empire had in operation just 170 parish schools, with the figure being 188 schools 25 years later, in 1849 (Sbornik, 1896: 459).

Note that in the early 19th century parochial schools were established in Russia mainly through the efforts of the clergy of a parish on a voluntary basis. All issues related to the establishment and operation of parochial schools had to be handled by priests, whose teaching activity was not paid work. For this reason, the existence of such schools cost the government nothing. Normally, the period of study at such schools was one year (two years at most), with students only able to learn the basics of reading and writing at them. Due to lack of funding, most school buildings did not meet the minimum standards, with most schools housed in church lodges, the houses of priests, or those of peasants.

The situation began to change in 1858, when Emperor Alexander II learnt from a gubernatorial report that in a certain governorate there were in operation several schools established through the efforts of priests. From that moment, complete information was to be provided to the emperor on the activity of all such schools in the country (Yakovkina, 2002: 314).

In the period under review, the Ecclesiastical Department ran the following types of educational institution: church-teacher's, second-rate, model, two-grade, one-grade, and grammar schools. Below is an outline of each of these types of educational institution.

Church-teacher's schools were pedagogical male and female educational institutions established for the preparation of teachers for parochial schools. These educational institutions were created in accordance with The Regulations for Church Schools under the Department of the Orthodox Faith.

Second-rate teacher's schools were male and female educational institutions with a three-year period of study intended for the preparation of teachers for grammar schools.

Model schools, which were quite rare, were established as an exemplar for education. These schools implemented and streamlined new pedagogical methods and techniques and developed new academic literature.

Two-grade educational institutions were schools with a four-year period of study.

One-grade educational institutions were schools with a two-year period of study.

Grammar schools were always in wide use in villages, which was due to an underdeveloped system of public education in Russia at the time. The thing is that grammar schools did not require either a school building or school paraphernalia. Normally, grammar schools were set up by peasants themselves, who hired **a special teacher, referred to as 'gramotey', for the purpose. Classes were held at the house of one of the village's peasants, for which reason these facilities were commonly known as home-based schools.** In 1786, the operation of home-based grammar schools was restricted (they were outlawed). They were reinstated only in 1882 at the behest of Minister of Public Education Baron von Nicolay.

Table 1 displays the number of educational institutions under the Ecclesiastical Department, the number of students and teachers in them, and the average number of students per educational institution under the Ecclesiastical Department.

Table 1. Primary educational institutions under the Ecclesiastical Department in the period 1860–1914 (Izvlachenie iz otcheta, 1862: 89; Izvlachenie iz otcheta, 1864: 89; Proekt polozeniya, 1883: 50; Izvlachenie iz otcheta, 1867: 95; Izvlachenie iz otcheta, 1869: 95; Izvlachenie iz otcheta, 1871: 95; Izvlachenie iz otcheta, 1872: 93; Izvlachenie iz otcheta, 1873: 93; Izvlachenie iz otcheta, 1874: 91; Izvlachenie iz otcheta, 1876: 91; Izvlachenie iz otcheta, 1878: 91; Izvlachenie iz otcheta, 1881: 91; Izvlachenie iz otcheta, 1882: 91; Izvlachenie iz otcheta, 1883: 91; Izvlachenie iz otcheta, 1884: 93; Izvlachenie iz otcheta, 1885: 93; Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1886: 93; Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1887: 93; Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1889: 95; Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1889: 92-93; Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1898: 139; Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1901: 64, 67; Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1902: 64, 67; Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1903: 66-67, 76; Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1905: 64,

72-73; Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1905a: 66, 72-73; Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1909: 120, 124, 128, 133, 136; Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1910: 208-209, 252-253, 244-245; Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1911: 216-217, 232-233, 246-247; Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1913: 114-115; Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1913a: 180-181, 208-209; Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1915: 124-125; Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1916: 126-127)

Year	Number of schools				Number of students			Number of students per school	Number of teachers	
	Parochial		Grammar schools	Other schools*	Total	Boys	Girls			Total
	Two-grade	One-grade								
1860	-	-	-	-	7,907	112,808	20,858	133,666	16.9	-
1861	-	-	-	-	18,587	271,263	49,987	320,350	17.2	-
1863	-	-	-	-	21,420	-	-	413,524	19.3	-
1866	-	-	-	-	19,436	328,349	54,831	383,181	19.7	-
1868	-	-	-	-	16,287	335,130	54,917	390,049	23.9	-
1870 [†]	-	-	-	-	13,007	253,585	39,579	293,164	22.5	-
1871	-	-	-	-	10,381	220,127	33,286	253,413	24.4	-
1872 [*]	-	-	-	-	9,059	196,339	31,697	228,036	25.1	-
1873 [§]	-	-	-	-	8,028	166,920	30,941	197,861	24.6	-
1875 ^{**}	-	-	-	-	7,402	175,979	29,580	205,559	27.7	-
1877 ^{††}	-	-	-	-	6,321	155,314	25,457	180,771	28.5	-
1879	-	-	-	-	4,681	101,569	16,611	118,230	25.4	-
1880	-	-	-	-	4,348	92,902	16,088	108,990	25.0	-
1881	-	-	-	-	4,404	87,747	17,034	104,781	23.7	-
1882 ^{**}	-	-	-	-	4,521	99,853	15,951	115,804	25.6	-
1883 ^{§§}	-	-	-	-	5,942	100,346	18,253	118,599	19.9	-
1884	-	-	-	-	4,640	94,144	17,970	112,114	24.1	-
1885	-	-	-	-	8,351	167,564	27,671	202,350	24.2	-
1886	-	-	-	-	11,693	274,320	44,332	318,652	27.2	-
1887	-	7,876	7,595	-	15,471	-	-	408,721	26.4	-
1894	-	-	-	-	29,259	-	-	909,992	31.1	-
1895	-	-	-	-	31,835	-	-	981,076	30.8	-
1898	273	17,674	21,501	394	39,842	1,116,968	336,751	145,3719	36.4	-
1899	307	18,751	21,900	444	41,402	1,164,024	390,205	1,554,229	37.5	-
1900	358	20,054	21,711	481	42,604	1,205,552	428,909	1,634,461	38.3	48,078
1901	411	21,323	21,364	503	43,601	1,271,598	493,314	1,764,912	40.4	49,730
1902	510	23,165	20,294	-	43,969	1,273,696	509,187	1,782,883	40.5	49,820
1903	571	23,998	19,431	-	44,000	1,325,127	562,651	1,887,778	42.9	-
1904	602	24,687	18,118	-	43,407	1,326,002	576,576	1,902,578	43.8	50,055
1905	615	24,863	16,967	-	42,445	1,351,259	616,032	1,967,291	46.3	49,173
1906	640	24,990	15,603	-	41,233	1,372,223	626,306	1,998,529	48.4	48,433
1907	672	25,425	13,650	-	39,747	1,326,711	589,434	1,916,145	48.2	47,134
1908	702	27,792	10,655	-	39,149	1,308,987	589,269	1,898,256	48.4	46,745
1909	755	32,959	4,726	-	38,443	1,306,548	619,052	1,925,600	50.0	46,454
1910	811	33,412	4,003	-	38,226	1,300,183	648,884	1,949,067	50.9	46,392

* 'Other schools' means the following: church-teacher's, second-rate, and model schools.

[†] Incomplete data for the year. Data not available for 9 dioceses.

^{*} Incomplete data for the year. Data not available for 4 dioceses.

[§] Incomplete data for the year. Data not available for 5 dioceses.

^{**} Incomplete data for the year. Data not available for 4 dioceses.

^{††} Incomplete data for the year. Data not available for 5 dioceses.

^{**} Incomplete data for the year. Data not available for 4 dioceses.

^{§§} Incomplete data for the year. Data not available for 4 dioceses.

1911	845	33,760	3,166	-	37,771	1,297,334	679,549	1,976,883	52.3	46,777
1912	934	34,024	2,683	-	37,641	1,282,348	686,019	1,968,367	52.2	47,720
1913	980	34,241	2,369	-	37,590	1,291,921	718,270	2,010,191	53.4	48,399
1914	1,016	34,341	2,171	-	37,528	1,300,142	779,749	2,079,891	55.4	48,718

As evidenced in Table 1, in the period 1860–1914 educational institutions under the Ecclesiastical Department went through two major periods of active development. The first period was linked with the abolition of serfdom in Russia, with the highest number of parochial schools registered first in 1863 and later in 1903. Regarding the reasons behind the drop in the number of these schools, it is worth considering that from 1866 to 1882 due to lack of funding members of the clergy were for the most part unable to set up and maintain the operation of such schools at their own expense or with funding from their parish. As for the second period associated with the drop in the number of parochial schools (from 1904 to 1914), the process was linked with the enlargement of the school system, with grammar schools, which were few at the time, made part of parochial schools and one-grade schools reorganized into two-grade ones.

Another area that is of interest is the student gender ratio at the time. Specifically, in 1860 female students accounted for 15.6% of the total student body. In 1880, the figure was 14.7%, in 1886 – 13.9%, in 1908 – 31%, and in 1914 – **37.4%**. Thus, the number of girls in the nation’s parochial schools had grown more than two times.

An analysis of the size of the teaching workforce in educational institutions under the Ecclesiastical Department in the period 1900–1914 indicates that there was an average of 1.2 teachers per educational institution at the time. Across the majority of educational institutions under the Ecclesiastical Department, there was one teacher per school. However, in the nation’s system of church schools there were two-grade schools, second-rate schools, and other types of school in which the number of teachers was a lot higher.

Another area that is of interest is the number of students per school under the Ecclesiastical Department. In 1860, there was an average of 16.9 students per school, while by 1914 the figure was now 55.4 students, an increase of over three times. The figure for 1860 is testimony that in 1860 the clergy tended to set up schools in places where it was impossible to establish ministerial schools and other types of school, namely lowly populated areas. This work conducted by members of the clergy is well comparable to missionary work, as they received no funding for their efforts.

Figure 3 illustrates the number of educational institutions under the Ecclesiastical Department in the period 1860–1914.

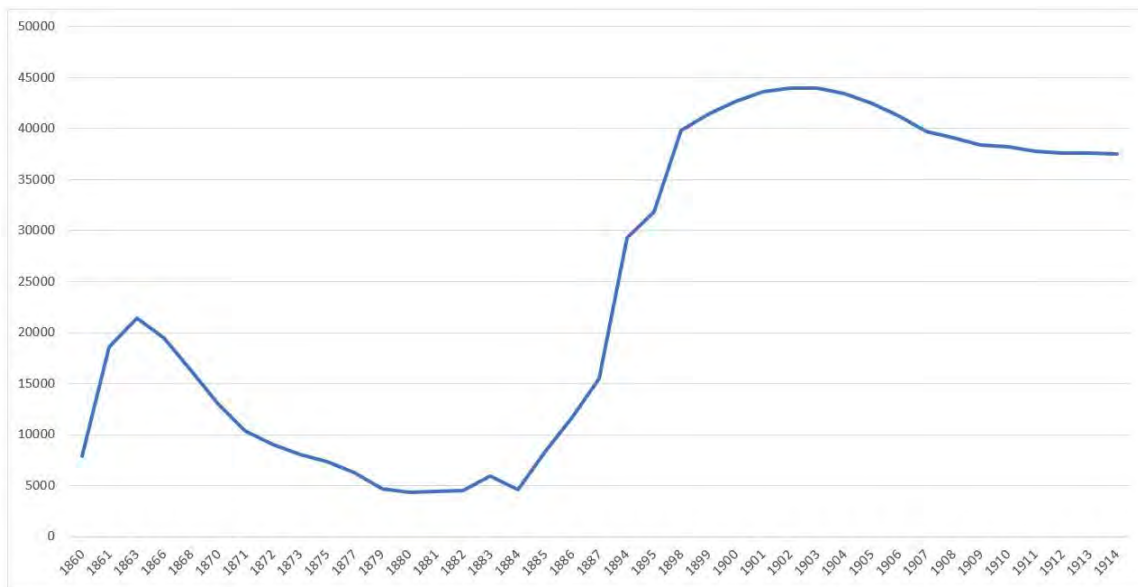


Fig. 1. Number of educational institutions under the Ecclesiastical Department in the period 1860–1914

Figure 2 illustrates the number of students in educational institutions under the Ecclesiastical Department in the period 1860–1914.

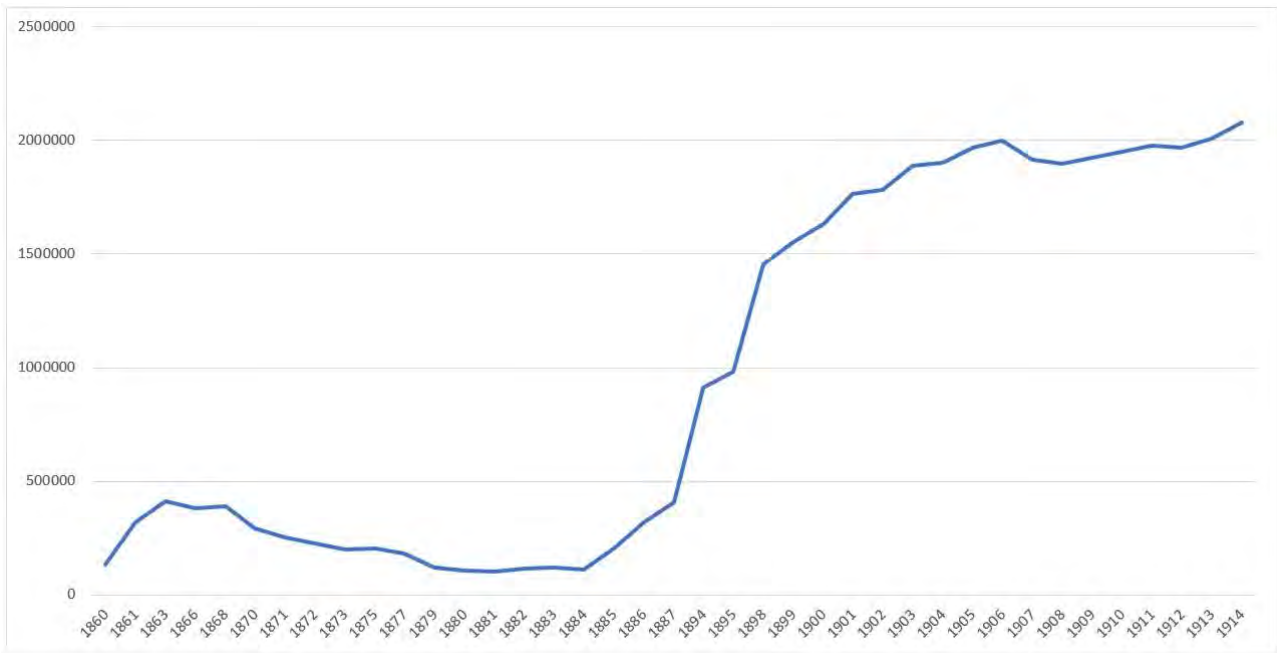


Fig. 2. Number of students enrolled in educational institutions under the Ecclesiastical Department in the period 1860–1914

Figure 3 illustrates the number of students per educational institution under the Ecclesiastical Department in the period 1860–1914.

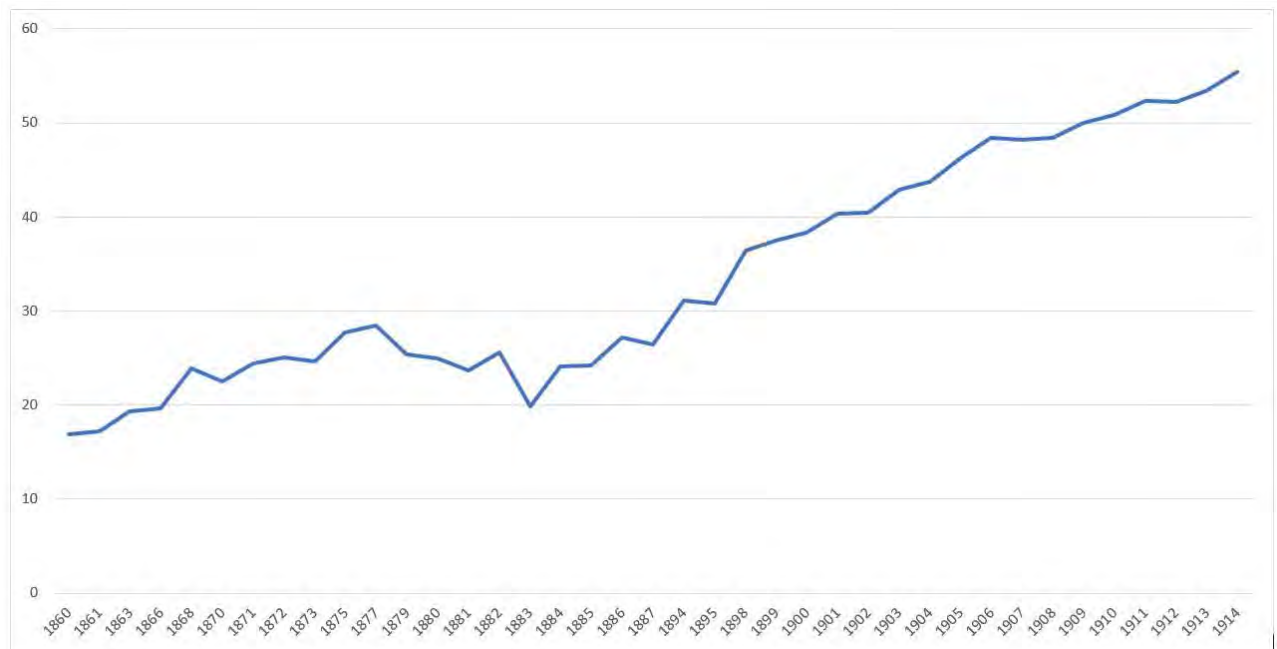


Fig. 3. Number of students per educational institution under the Ecclesiastical Department in the period 1860–1914

As the educational system under the Ecclesiastical Department developed further, extensive experience would be amassed in this area. In 1884, subsequent to the emperor signing into law

The Rules for Parochial Schools, parochial educational institutions were placed on one footing with ministerial schools in terms of the number of subjects taught, requirements for assignments, and pay. Progressive growth in the development of the educational system under the Ecclesiastical Department continued even into the opening stages of World War I. By that time, schools under the Ecclesiastical Department were attended by nearly 25% of all students in the Russian Empire. The first major blow to the educational system under the Ecclesiastical Department was dealt by the Provisional Government on June 20, 1917. Via its decree, the Provisional Government removed from the purview of the Holy Synod nearly 37,000 schools funded by the state (the Holy Synod had around 1,000 ecclesiastical schools left). Following the advent of the Bolsheviks to power and the adoption by them on December 24, 2017 of the Decree on the Transfer of the Purview of the **Educational System under the Ecclesiastical Department to the People's Commissariat on Education**, the rest of the schools were taken away from the Holy Synod as well. As a result, the Holy Synod had to relinquish completely its academic-pedagogical function in the country.

4. Conclusion

In the period 1860–1917, the system of educational institutions under the Ecclesiastical Department went through two major periods of active development (one subsequent to the abolition of serfdom and the other subsequent to the adoption of The Rules for Parochial Schools) and one major period of stagnation (in the 1870s). Throughout said period, the educational system under the Ecclesiastical Department kept developing, with its schools getting bigger and grammar schools undergoing reorganization and the number of its students per school growing continually. By 1914, the number of students enrolled in schools under the Ecclesiastical Department surpassed two million, which constituted nearly 25% of all students in the Russian Empire. At the peak of its development, the school system under the Ecclesiastical Department was terminated in 1917, with the schools placed under the purview of the Ministry of Public Education.

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