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Published in the USA
 Bylye Gody
 Has been issued since 2006.
 E-ISSN: 2310-0028
 2025. 20(1): 311-320
 DOI: 10.13187/bg.2025.1.311

Journal homepage:
<https://bg.cherkasgu.press>



Pre-Soviet Historiography of Vocational Education Development in Kherson Gubernia (19th – early 20th centuries)

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Abstract

A general analysis of the pre-Soviet (imperial) historiography on the issue of vocational education development in Kherson gubernia through the prism of historical and pedagogical science is provided in the research paper. Special attention is paid to highly specialized works with serious information potential for studying the history of various educational institutions in the region under study.

Summarizing the literature review, several main groups can be distinguished in the entire body of literature (the division is general and does not claim to be universal): works of local nature, where the author focuses on a specific educational institution or narrowly limited geography (for example, educational institutions of a particular city); works of all-Russian nature, where the primary attention of the author is focused either on the general state of vocational education or on a particular field of vocational education – maritime, agricultural, crafts, or railroad; works of pedagogical direction designed to improve the content characteristics of vocational education and training; studies in the sphere of pedagogy conducted to improve the substantive characteristics of the educational process.

It should be noted that specific issues are reflected in pre-revolutionary historiography but no generalizing studies are conducted. Most works that uncover the history of local educational institutions are of a factual nature and represent more of a worthwhile source than a historiographic achievement.

All-Russia studies are limited to the difficulties in training workers, mainly for the industrial central regions of the Russian Empire. Kherson gubernia is rarely mentioned in all these works (except a few regional studies), although the vocational educational institutions of the region had already accumulated a certain amount of experience by that time.

That is why an objective and comprehensive scientific study of the issue is required, the basis of which should be made up of both the developments of pre-Soviet historiography and the latest scientific research results in modern historical and pedagogical sciences, archival materials, modern methodological developments in the field of vocational education and other materials.

Keywords: vocational education, Kherson gubernia, historiography, Russian Empire, history of science.

1. Introduction

Despite the relevance of the stated issue, no comprehensive work would have considered the historical and pedagogical processes of vocational education development not only at the regional level (within Kherson gubernia) but also in the realm of the whole Ukraine or the Russian Empire. A study that would contain a scientific analysis and characterization of the features and substantive characteristics of the educational institutions of vocational education activities in the region still needs to be conducted.

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However, it should be noted that there is a large number of studies of the pre-Soviet era of a general and subject-specific nature. The aforementioned historiography concerns only individual aspects of the issue being studied and is formed in a relatively limited theoretical and methodological plane and, as a rule, mainly relies on published statistical or reporting materials or even personal observations. In such works, the analytics is only partially present. The works of a general nature provide information on the history and content of education in vocational institutions of the given period, but, as a rule, the factual material and the conclusions that are drawn on its basis do not touch upon the region being studied.

At the same time, the imperial historiography left to the modern researcher a large number of important, focused on details works that uncover the history of development and content characteristics of certain vocational educational institutions. Such works are valuable for their factual content, especially in the conditions of partial preservation of the documents of Ukrainian archives, which were significantly damaged during World War II.

Proceeding from the above, the *authors aim to analyze* the available works on the history of vocational education both at the general imperial and regional levels, from their origin to the fall of the Russian Empire. The primary attention is paid to the issue of highlighting the history of vocational educational institutions of Kherson gubernia, as well as the content characteristics of their activities.

2. Materials and methods

The historiography of the development of vocational education in the Russian Empire is extensive and well-studied. However, its development in some areas of that state received less attention. When studying the degree of study of vocational education in Kherson gubernia of the 19th – early 20th centuries, a relatively large array of scientific and journalistic works in the framework of the specified issue has been analyzed. Predominantly, these are studies relating to the late 19th – early 20th centuries. Among the proceeded sources, there are also individual issues of the ‘Technical Review’ journal, on the pages of which some of the mentioned works are published.

It should be noted that some of the author’s works analyzed by us are archaeological rather than research works. Such works contain few analytical conclusions of the authors but provide much factual material taken from official sources of that time. In fact, such works in our time have acquired the character of a historical source. The memoir sources ([Afanas'yev-Chuzhbinskiy, 1859](#); [Afanas'yev-Chuzhbinskiy, 1861](#)) are also used in the study process.

In our work, the principles of historical research, in particular historicism and objectivism, are applied. The usage of systemic and chronological methods allows the authors to focus on the array of studies conducted by historians and educators of the pre-Soviet period. The comparative method allows for determining the works’ specifics (thematic areas).

3. Discussion

The study of the development of vocational education in the Russian Empire in recent decades has again gained relevance. Several works have emerged, attempting to fill the gaps in the history of vocational educational institutions from new positions and with the involvement of new sources, showing their importance for the educational system, drawing positive lessons in the system of training of workers and employees, and taking into account the negative aspects of the imperial education system. In such works, we also find small historiographical reviews that analyze pre-revolutionary studies.

The dissertations, where a separate paragraph is devoted to the historiography of the problem, are of particular interest. For example, Kherson researcher Ya. Nahrybelnyy ([Nahrybelnyy, 2012: 12-17](#)) summarizes the existence of works reflecting certain aspects of the development of vocational education in the present Kherson oblast. As a result, he concludes that “although pre-revolutionary scholars did not create fundamental generalizing works on the past of vocational education in Kherson region, in synthetic studies, they left a noticeable trace in reflecting the issues of establishment, formation, and development of this educational field in the region” ([Nahrybelnyy, 2012: 16](#)). The well-known researcher of the history of maritime education, O. Chorny, also focuses on the historiographical aspect of the problem. He has deeply analyzed the available literature, allowing him to analyze the pre-Soviet historiography in detail ([Chorny, 2007: 10-24](#)). Later, this analysis becomes the basis for a research paper studying the historiography of maritime educational institutions in Southern Ukraine in the late 18th – early 20th century ([Chorny, 2009](#)). General works of the imperial era in the context of the development of maritime education are analyzed in the dissertation by A. Lyashkevych ([Lyashkevych, 2019: 81-86](#)). Modern Ukrainian researchers O. Trygub, S. Degtyarev, V. Parkhomenko, and others give a general historiographical review of the issue in their research paper ([Trygub, 2023](#); [Trygub et al., 2023a](#); [Trygub et al., 2023b](#); [Trygub, Degtyarev, 2023](#); [Trygub, Chalavan, 2024](#); [Trygub, Honchar, 2024](#); [Trygub, Stepanchuk, 2024](#)).

4. Results

The importance and relevance of this issue have determined modern scholars’ great interest in studying the history of vocational education. As modern researcher S.S. Baldin has successfully noted, this is an interdisciplinary field, so it is the research subject for historical, pedagogical, and economic sciences.

In this regard, the historiography of the educational field under study cannot be limited to the analysis of purely historical works, and it is necessary to study the results of pedagogues, economists, demographers, and other experts in social sciences research (Baldin, 2006: 125-126).

The authors of works on the history of vocational education in the imperial era and its pedagogical content are local historians and public figures, educators, and state officials: A. Skalkovskij, Odessa historian and state official; V. Akimov, Inspector of Alekseevka Crafts School; E. Andreev, founder of the Russian Technical Society; I. Anopov, statesman in the field of education; I. Vyshnegradskij, scientist-mechanic and Minister of Finance of the Russian Empire; S. Vladimirsij, engineer-mechanic and educator; A. Nebolsin, state official and Head of the Permanent Commission for Technical Education at the Russian Technical Society, and many others. Most pre-revolutionary researchers were direct participants in developing vocational education in the Russian Empire and, accordingly, in Southern Ukraine.

One of the first to address the history of educational institutions of the region under study is A. Weinberg (Weynberg, 1857), who, in his research paper, uncovers the history of Kherson School of Merchant Shipping in the 1830s – 1850s. In his study, the author characterizes the institution's formation and development process. The work allows us to orient ourselves to the difficulties experienced by the School at the initial stage of its existence and to reveal the factors complicating its functioning. The researcher critically examines the curricula and the methods and principles of the educational process in the training of seamen for the commercial fleet. Among the reasons hindering the quality of knowledge acquisition by the students, A. Weinberg singles out insufficient funding, curricula redundancy, and lack of qualified teachers. Of no doubt, this is one of the most valuable historical and pedagogical works, uncovering the history of maritime educational institutions of Kherson gubernia.

Similarly to A. Weinberg's paper, there is also a mention of the School in the memoir-historical work by A. Afanas'yev-Chuzhbinskiy 'Trip to Southern Russia' (Afanas'yev-Chuzhbinskiy, 1859: 334-341; Afanas'yev-Chuzhbinskiy, 1861: 335-341), where the author pays much attention to the educational institution. Having highlighted the history of the establishment and development of Kherson School of Merchant Shipping, he also describes the educational aspects of the pedagogical process – theoretical and practical subjects studied in the educational institution, the rights of graduates, and special conditions of study and employment. The writer also shows the shortcomings – insufficient funding, insecure conditions of material facilities of the School, and lack of 'commercial sciences' in the educational process.

In the context of the history of maritime education, it is also necessary to mention the work of S. Ogorodnikov, devoted to the first Black Sea vocational schools in the Northern Black Sea region (Ogorodnikov, 1900). The author mentions that it is the first truly scientific study based on authentic documents, with a scientific apparatus with references. In his work, the author is the first to study the history of the establishment of one of the first vocational institutions in the region – the School of Naval Architecture. Most of the work materials are devoted to training military navigators and officers.

Historical reviews from various vocational educational institutions of Kherson gubernia, mainly published for anniversary dates, are of great importance for our study. Such reviews become very popular in the late 19th – early 20th centuries and are published as separate brochures and articles in periodicals. The following should be singled out among such publications: 'Historical Review on 25 Years of Activity of Kherson Zemstvo Agricultural School. 1874-1899' (Istoricheskiy ocherk..., 1900), 'On the 25th Anniversary of Odessa School of Gardening and Horticulture' (Shesterikov, 1912), 'Review on the Activity of Elisavetgrad Society for the Dissemination of Commercial Education during the First Five-Year Period' (Ocherk deyatel'nosti..., 1914), 'Historical Review on the Fiftieth Anniversary of Odessa Commercial School' (Istoricheskiy ocherk..., 1912a; Istoricheskiy ocherk..., 1912b), 'The Past Decade of Odessa Milling Technical School and Its Tasks in the Future. 1902-1912' (Reysikh, 1912), and others. Brochures dedicated to the anniversary dates of Odessa 'Trud' (Labor) Society and Odessa Crafts School are published twice. In 1890, a brochure dedicated to the 20th anniversary of Odessa 'Trud' Society (Izvlcheniye..., 1890) is published describing the reasons and process of developing the Society and establishing a crafts school at it. An addition to that brochure is published in 1910, and this allows us to trace almost the entire history of this crafts school (Svedeniya..., 1910). In the mentioned works, contemporary researchers attempt to show the history of the educational institution, reveal the difficulties of its development, the content of the educational process, the material and technical facilities, and give a brief characteristic of the teaching staff. Such works are of great importance for a modern researcher, acting simultaneously as a synthetic work of a researcher and a source base for a modern scholar.

During the period of the late 19th – early 20th centuries, the first generalizing works dedicated to the current and future anniversaries of the former Novorossiia region cities – Odessa, Nikolaev, Elisavetgrad, and Kherson, are published (Bernshteyn, 1881; Fedorov, 1894; Odessa, 1895; Ge, 1890; Gorlovskiy, 1896; Murzakevich, 1879; Pashutin, 1897). In the above-mentioned works, we find information about establishing various vocational educational institutions, the number of students, the founding fathers, the construction of buildings, and other matters. It is especially necessary to note the thorough publication of a group of authors dedicated to the centenary of Odessa 'Odessa. 1794-1894' (1895), where a separate chapter is devoted to education development (pp. 569-704). This detailed work gives information on establishing a commercial school, a technical railway school, a school of foremasters, crafts schools, a horticulture school, music classes,

and others. The book contains some photographs of vocational educational institutions – Odessa Crafts School and Odessa School of Gardening and Horticulture. The supplement ‘Vedomost’ (record on the number of students in educational institutions of Odessa) to the book gives an overview not only of the quantitative characteristics of the students but also of their religion, social background, and citizenship (Russia or foreign).

The most thorough is the generalizing work, which describes all vocational and technical educational institutions of Odessa, allowing us to reconstruct the whole picture of the state of vocational education in the city in the early 20th century (*Tekhnicheskoye...*, 1895). The descriptions of educational institutions in the book are presented according to a uniform scheme and uncover the conditions for establishing an educational institution, its material, technical, and financial state, the composition of the teaching staff, and the content and conditions of training. Also interesting and quite valuable from the factual side is the work dedicated to developing Odessa Private Secondary Electrotechnical School of V.P. Gadzyaczkiy (*Odesskoye...*, 1911).

The role of public organizations and their active members in the establishing of vocational educational institutions in Elisavetgrad is vividly described in the work by P. Ryabkov ‘A Brief Historical Review on Elisavetgrad Society for the Dissemination of Literacy and Crafts: 1873-1898’ (1898) (*Ryabkov, 1898*). The author not only shows the path and difficulties of the organization’s development but also uncovers its role in the development of Elisavetgrad Crafts and Literacy School and briefly describes training in it.

At the turn of the century, the issue of forming a network of educational institutions for training craftsmen begins to sound increasingly louder in the Russian Empire. The first generalizing studies on the issue of vocational training of workers appear in the late 19th – early 20th centuries. The works of those years mainly touch on the issues of training personnel for a particular sector of the economy. By then, publications summarizing the experience accumulated by vocational educational institutions have already been published. The problems of professional training of workers and experts are periodically discussed in the pages of the journals ‘Technical Education’ and ‘Technical and Commercial Education.’ Schematic reviews of materials on the history of vocational and technical education can be found in the works of V. Akimov (*Akimov, 1916*), E. Andreyev (*Andreyev, 1872; Andreyev, 1892*), I. Anopov (*Anopov, 1889; Anopov, 1895*), S. Vladimirskiy (*Vladimirskiy, 1896*), N. Korolkov (*Korolkov, 1897; Korolkov, 1912*), I. Maksin (*Maksin, 1909*), A. Nebolsin (*Nebolsin, 1883; Nebolsin, 1903; Nebolsin, 1912*), and other public figures, educators, and researchers (*Goshkevich, 1908; Yershov, 1904; Zavadskiy, 1908; Lavrinovich, 1898; Lavrinovich, 1902; Lyskovskiy, 1897; Lyskovskiy, 1906; Chuprov, 1899*). These works develop the idea of the superiority of stationary training of workers, the need to expand the network of vocational educational institutions in the Empire, define the features and main trends of the educational process organizing, and characterize the regulatory and legal support for vocational education. The value of these works is also in a large amount of factual and statistical material – however, the works of I. Anopov and E. Nebolsin provide data relating to the second half of the 19th century, while a significant increase in the number of vocational schools in the Russian Empire occurs in the late 19th – early 20th centuries.

One of the eminent experts in the field of vocational education in the Russian Empire is Ivan Alekseevich Anopov, the famous educator, public figure, and organizer of vocational education. In one of the first works, ‘Experience of Systematic Review of Materials for the Study of the Current State of Secondary and Lower Technical and Crafts Education in Russia,’ I. Anopov systematizes the information about the network of vocational educational institutions of the Russian Empire and gives an analysis of vocational and technical education. Using the example of Lodz Crafts School, he substantiates the need for general secondary education as a vocational basis, summarizing the experience of that educational institution, which provided both general secondary and vocational secondary education. Unfortunately, this thorough work is of mainly theoretical importance to us since it is devoted mainly to crafts and technical schools in Russia. Among the educational institutions of Kherson gubernia, the work mentions Elisavetgrad Crafts and Literacy School (*Anopov, 1889: 395-400*).

In his other theoretical work, ‘On the Issue of General Secondary School with Its Application to the Demands and Needs of Modern Life in Some Areas of Russia’ (*Anopov, 1900*), he proposes a new type of secondary educational institution that, based on the convergence of general education and vocational training, would prepare for further education and practical activities.

Vladimir Evgrafovich Akimov, Inspector of Alekseevka Crafts School, named after A.A. Samoylenko, devotes several works to the methods of teaching specific subjects. He prepares the textbook ‘Systematic Course of Elementary Technical Drawing’, intended for independent practical acquisition of technical drawing skills and work with drawing tools by beginners and is compiled according to the curricula of industrial and crafts schools (*Akimov, 1906*); textbooks for lower technical, crafts, and city vocational schools, courses for workers and self-study in theoretical and practical geometry (*Akimov, 1907*); and the ability to work with wood (*Akimov, 1911*).

Sergey Alekseevich Vladimirskiy, mechanical engineer and the Director of the Metalworking and Crafts School of the Society for the Dissemination of Technical Knowledge (Moscow), also focuses on the issues of teaching methods in vocational and technical educational institutions, having worked out a course in applied mechanics and methods of teaching metalworking, published as separate works (*Vladimirskiy,*

1887; Vladimirskiy, 1895). The researcher presents similar reports at the Congress of Russian Figures on Technical and Vocational Education in Russia in 1890 (Vladimirskiy, 1890a; Vladimirskiy, 1890b).

The works of Vasilij Vasilevich Vinogradov, the Head of the General Directorate of Merchant Shipping and Ports, on the issues of maritime educational institutions should be mentioned separately (Vinogradov, 1908; Vinogradov, 1912). His books contain rich factual and statistical material on maritime education before 1912. V.V. Vinogradov gives historical reviews of the activities of maritime schools in the 18th – early 20th centuries, using materials from the archives of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Trade and Industry. The researcher also does not miss the Southern Ukraine region, providing generalized information on the financial and material condition of all vocational schools in the Black Sea basin and paying special attention to Odessa School of Merchant Shipping. At the same time, the author notes that the School in Odessa ranks first in the Russian Empire among similar educational institutions in terms of expenditures for the teaching staff and the upkeep of students (as of 1910) (Vinogradov, 1912: 92-94).

The important role of the Russian Technical Society and the Permanent Commission for Technical Education operating under it in the last quarter of the 19th century is illustrated in the works of Nikolay Maksimovich Korolkov (Korolkov, 1897; Korolkov, 1912). The analytical review by Ivan Moiseevich Maksin shows the place of the Ministry of Public Education in developing vocational and technical education in the Russian Empire (Maksin, 1909).

In the 1890s, the Russian Technical Society commissions an economic assessment of public education and, above all, of the relationship between the level of education and labor productivity and, accordingly, its salaries. The work results in the publication of two issues of the collection ‘Economic Assessment of Public Education’ (Yanzhul et al., 1896; Yanzhul et al., 1899). In this collection, the study of L. Gavrishev, ‘Training of the Craftsmen of Nikolaev Admiralty and Its Impact on the Productivity of Their Work’ (Gavrishev, 1899), is of the most significant interest to our research. Having processed a considerable array of statistical information, the author comes to the conclusion that Nikolaev Port Crafts School, in his opinion, is an ordinary general education institution that “provides only an extremely meager course of ‘explaining materials’ and thereby limits its specialty... It teaches crafts mainly in the Admiralty”, which does not provide its students with any advantages over ordinary students at the Admiralty workshops (Gavrishev, 1899: 122-123). In general, the author notes that it is necessary to raise the general level of training of craftsmen at enterprises since this has no less an effect on labor productivity than the worker’s physical strength. Other authors of the aforementioned collection adhere to the same point of view.

Also interesting is the report of the aforementioned author about the establishment of evening and Sunday classes in technical drawing and painting for adult craftsmen in Nikolaev (Gavrishev, 1896).

A unique approach to secondary vocational education is characteristic of the famous Russian researchers and educators K.D. Ushinskiy (Ushinskiy, 1974), D.I. Mendeleev (Mendeleev, 1901), and P.F. Kapterev (Kapterev, 1914). They oppose substituting general secondary education for vocational education, emphasizing that the latter must necessarily be based on general secondary education. In addition, they advocate the fastest and widest possible development of a network of vocational schools due to the need to avoid the dependence of the Russian economy on foreign experts.

Since the last quarter of the 19th century, there has been an interest in the formation and development of agricultural education in the Russian Empire. Among the abundant works, it is necessary to highlight the works of N. Moskalskiy (Moskalskiy, 1881), A. Nebolsin (Nebolsin, 1884), I. Stebut (Stebut, 1889), F. Geyduk (Geyduk, 1891), I. Miklashevskiy (Miklashevskiy, 1893), and S. Bogushevskiy (Bogushevskiy, 1898).

All the mentioned authors provide a general idea of the formation of systemic agricultural education in the Russian Empire, primarily analyzing its European part. The work of F. Geyduk, who analyzes data on the activities of fifty lower agricultural educational institutions, is quite thorough, expressing his vision of their effectiveness, indicating not only the positive aspects of the formation of agricultural education but also its shortcomings. Since the book is written on materials from before 1889, the lower educational institutions of Kherson gubernia are not included in the book because they do not exist yet. I. Miklashevskiy distinguishes three stages in forming and developing agricultural education: pre-reform, reform period, and post-reform. Also, the author insists on the superiority of theoretical education over the formation of practical skills.

Often, such studies are incomplete in factual material, not all educational institutions are mentioned (which is probably due to the problem of obtaining information about them because of their different subordination – the Ministry of State Property, local zemstvos, private individuals), or the mention is passing and uninformative (for example, A. Nebolsin tells about Kherson Agricultural School in 4 lines, erroneously stating that it was established (correctly – transformed into a vocational school) in 1882, and specifies the number of students in the 1882/1883 academic year) (Nebolsin, 1884: 190).

The issues of zemstvo participation in the development of agricultural education can be found in the works of famous ‘historians of zemstvos’ I. Belokonskiy (Belokonskiy, 1894) and B. Veselovskiy (Veselovskiy, 1909). I. Belokonskiy studies the zemstvos’ activities in the field of agricultural education, using the example of several gubernias, including Kherson, showing in detail the state of the agricultural school in Kherson. The famous historian of zemstvos, B. Veselovskiy, gives a general overview of zemstvo activities in the sphere of agricultural education, noting the key role of zemstvos in funding educational institutions, selecting teaching and management personnel, and resolving organizational issues.

5. Conclusion

Summarizing the literature review, we can say that several main groups can be distinguished in the entire body of literature (the division is general and does not claim to be universal): works of a local nature, where the author focuses on a specific educational institution or the ones narrowly limited geography (for example, educational institutions of a particular city); works of an all-Russia nature, where the author's primary attention is focused either on the general state of vocational and technical education, or on a particular field of vocational education – maritime, agricultural, crafts, or railway; studies in the sphere of pedagogy, conducted to improve the substantive characteristics of the educational process.

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