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The System of Public Education in Don Host Oblast (1790–1917). Part 2

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Abstract

This study explores the system of public education in Don Host Oblast in the period 1790–1917. The present part of the study focuses on the period 1900–1917.

The study's source base is divided into the following two groups of sources: 1) archival materials from the Russian State Historical Archive (Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation); 2) periodicals produced by the Don Host Statistics Committee and the Holy Synod. The archival materials are represented by relevant documents from Holding No. 733 ('Department of Public Education at the Ministry of Public Education'). The periodicals include *The Memorandum Book for Don Host Oblast, Don Oblast and the North Caucasus*, and *The Most Faithful Report of the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod*.

The study's findings revealed that the system of public education in Don Host Oblast saw much success during the imperial period. Both genders there had access to all the levels of education, including higher education. As early as 1914, the combined number of educational institutions in the region was above 2,500, and the combined number of students there was over 206,000. The government of Don Host Oblast achieved significant success in primary education, with more than 80 % of the region's school-age children going to school in 1914.

Keywords: Don Host Oblast, Russian Empire, system of public education, schools, gymnasiums, period 1790–1917.

1. Introduction

At the beginning of the 20th century, Don Host Oblast was part of the Kharkov Educational District (Cherkasov, 2023: 1686). In 1901, it had a population of over 2.6 million. By 1914, the

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figure had reached 3.4 million (RGIA. F. 733. Op. 207. D. 30. L. 1). The region was overwhelmingly dominated by Orthodox Christians. The present work aims to examine the system of public education in Don Host Oblast in the period 1900–1917.

2. Materials and methods

The study's source base is divided into the following two groups of sources: 1) archival materials from the Russian State Historical Archive (Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation); 2) periodicals produced by the Don Host Statistics Committee and the Holy Synod.

The archival materials are represented by relevant documents from Holding No. 733 ('Department of Public Education at the Ministry of Public Education'). The periodicals include *The Memorandum Book for Don Host Oblast, Don Oblast and the North Caucasus*, and *The Most Faithful Report of the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod*. It must be noted that the local statistics committee did not gather specially detailed information about the development and state of the system of public education in Don Host Oblast. As a consequence, the materials published in the periodicals contain information about educational institutions under the purviews of all the Departments, not detailed by departmental affiliation.

As in the previous part of the work, use was made of content analysis to extract from a vast body of statistical information only data deemed relevant to the study. In addition, use was made of the systems method to divide the material into groups (that on educational institutions under the purview of the Ministry of Public Education and that on educational institutions under the purview of the Holy Synod). Lastly, the use of the retrospective method helped examine the subject in historical sequence.

3. Discussion

The historiography on the subject may be divided into two thematic groups: 1) publications on the history of the system of public education in Don Host Oblast; 2) publications on the history of the system of public education in other governorates and oblasts across the Russian Empire in the early 20th century.

Public education in Don Host Oblast began to be conceptualized back in the prerevolutionary period. Specifically, A.M. Savel'yev devotes some attention to education there in his 1870 work, dedicated to the Host's 300th anniversary (Savel'ev, 1870), while the work by A.A. Kirilov is focused on the history of public education in the 19th century Don region (Kirilov, 1902).

In the late 20th century, R.M. Sit'ko touched upon public education in Don Host Oblast as part of exploring the making and development of the system of public education in Southern Russia (Sit'ko, 1997). The system of public education in the region in the post-reform period was also investigated by M.A. Kolomeytseva (Kolomeitseva, 2015).

As regards the second group, the early-20th-century systems of public education in governorates and oblasts across the Russian Empire have been explored in the following works: the one by T.A. Magsumov and his colleagues, focused on the system of public education in Astrakhan Governorate (Magsumov et al., 2022), the one by A.M. Mamadaliyev and his colleagues, focused on the system of public education in Penza Governorate (Mamadaliyev et al., 2022), the one by O.V. Natolochnaya and her colleagues, focused on the system of public education in Vilna Governorate (Natolochnaya et al., 2020), the one by V.S. Molchanova and her colleagues, focused on primary education in another Cossack region, Kuban Oblast (Molchanova et al., 2020), and the one by K.V. Taran and his colleagues, focused on private education in the Caucasus Educational District, including in the early 20th century (Taran et al., 2021).

4. Results

Educational institutions under the purview of the Ministry of Public Education

By 1900, Don Host Oblast had nine male and six female secondary educational institutions (Rajović et al., 2023: 1034). There were 11 lower educational institutions for boys and four for girls (Donskaya oblast'..., 1902: 16). The total number of primary schools in the region, inclusive of those under the purview of the Ecclesiastical Department, was a combined 1,518 schools for boys and both genders and 162 schools for girls (Donskaya oblast'..., 1902: 16).

In 1907, Novocherkassk became home to the region's first higher educational institution – Alekseyevsky Don Polytechnic Institute, and in 1910 the same city became home to the Higher Women's Natural-Science Courses, making higher education accessible to females as well.

In 1908, the number of students in Don Host Oblast was 159,093 (Pamyatnaya knizhka..., 1913: 44). The figure was 161,644 the following year (Pamyatnaya knizhka..., 1914: 47).

In 1910, the number of students in Don Host Oblast was 169,477 (Pamyatnaya knizhka..., 1915: 38). The figure was 175,551 in 1911 (Pamyatnaya knizhka..., 1915: 38).

In 1912, the number of students in Don Host Oblast was 178,970 (Pamyatnaya knizhka..., 1915: 38). The region had 40 secondary and 1,357 primary educational institutions (Pamyatnaya knizhka..., 1914: 43-44).

By 1913, the region had all the levels of education available to learners – from higher to lower.

The higher level was represented by Alekseyevsky Don Polytechnic Institute, with an enrollment of 251 males, and the Higher Women's Courses, with an enrollment of 37 females (Pamyatnaya knizhka..., 1915: 36).

The secondary level was represented by a group comprised of 42 secondary educational institutions¹, which included the following: a Cossack school, a cadet corps, five classical male gymnasiums, an ecclesiastical seminary, seven real schools, a teacher's institute, a surveyor's school, a technical school, a commercial school, an agricultural school, an institute for maidens, eight female gymnasiums, two diocesan female schools, and 11 private schools. These educational institutions had a combined enrollment of 5,448 students (Pamyatnaya knizhka..., 1915: 36-37).

The lower level of education in the region was represented by the following types of school at the start of the 20th century: teacher's seminary; church-teacher's; two-grade; technical; urban; higher primary; ecclesiastical; parish; trade; private; garden nursery; nautical; military-feldsher, military-trade; forestry; enology-and-viticulture; and some others² (Pamyatnaya knizhka..., 1915: 37).

As at January 1, 1914, the region's 1,491 educational institutions under the purview of the Ministry of Public Education had a combined enrollment of 111,427 (81,663 boys and 29,764 girls) (Pamyatnaya knizhka..., 1915: 38). Its 1,426 primary schools had a combined enrollment of 109,611 (77 students per school). At that time, the region's higher educational institutions had a combined enrollment of 896, and its secondary – 6,181 (RGIA. F. 733. Op. 207. D. 30. L. 1).

Educational institutions under the purview of the Ecclesiastical Department

As already noted earlier, in 1900 Don Host Oblast had 497 such schools, with a combined enrollment of over 23,000. It is fair to note that the figure is exclusive of the region's literacy schools under the purview of the Ecclesiastical Department (opened in its little-populated areas). Inclusive of these schools, the figure would be 889, with a combined enrollment of 37,000 (Vsepoddanneishii otchet..., 1902: 66-67).

The data in Table 1 illustrate the dynamics of the development of parochial education in the Don Diocese in 1900–1914.

Table 1. Parochial Schools in the Don Diocese in 1900–1914 (Vsepoddanneishii otchet..., 1902: 66; Vsepoddanneishii otchet..., 1905: 66, 72; Vsepoddanneishii otchet..., 1905a: 66, 72; Vsepoddanneishii otchet..., 1909: 118, 122, 126, 134; Vsepoddanneishii otchet..., 1910: 212-213, 228-229, 248-249; Vsepoddanneishii otchet..., 1911: 214-215, 218-219; Vsepoddanneishii otchet..., 1913: 110-111; Vsepoddanneishii otchet..., 1913a: 172-173, 176-177; Vsepoddanneishii otchet..., 1915: 120-121; Vsepoddanneishii otchet..., 1916: 122-123)

Year	Number of schools			Number of students			Number of students per school
	Church schools	Literacy schools	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	
1900	–	–	497	14,347	9,224	23,571	47,4 ³
1901	546	373	919	35,519	18,746	54,265	59,0
1902	571	369	940	27,298	17,799	45,097	47,9
1903	582	345	927	28,263	19,077	47,340	51,0
1904	604	302	906	28,487	19,535	48,022	53,0
1905	661	323	984	34,117	22,752	56,869	57,7
1906	680	281	961	33,608	23,179	56,787	59,0

¹ This level includes secondary educational institutions under the purviews of all the Departments.

² The group incorporates lower educational institutions under the purviews of all the Departments.

³ Data incomplete

1907	690	247	937	32,890	22,452	55,342	59,0
1908	705	214	919	33,281	23,170	56,451	61,4
1909	652	189	841	29,857	21,562	51,419	61.1
1910	877	21	898	31,703	22,704	54,407	60,5
1911	881	18	899	31,192	22,864	54,056	60,1
1912	826	1	827	27,864	21,212	49,076	59,3
1913	887	17	904	32,782	25,748	58,530	64,7
1914	910	13	923	34,325	28,723	63,048	68,3

As evidenced in [Table 2](#), in the period 1901–1914 the number of parochial schools in the region varied from 827 in 1912 to 984 in 1905. Furthermore, the number of students per school in this sector grew virtually every year. An interesting transformation was also experienced at the time by the region’s literacy schools – the figure gradually dropped from the maximum value of 373 in 1901 to one in 1912; afterwards, there was a sharp increase in their number – to 17 in 1913; and then it dropped again – to 13 in 1914. This transformation indicates that, despite the authorities’ intention to eliminate the literacy school sector, it was not possible to eliminate it entirely in Don Host Oblast. Apparently, there were areas in that region where it was not advisable to set up even a small parochial school.

Of interest is also the gender composition of the student body in the region’s parochial school sector. Specifically, in 1901 girls accounted for about one-third (34.5%) of the student body in that sector. By 1914, the figure was 45.5 %. As a reminder, in 1897 the region also experienced a gender imbalance, with males outnumbering females (1.3 million versus 1.275 million) ([Naselenie..., 1898: 27](#)).

The data in [Table 2](#) provide a general picture of the development of the system of public education in Don Host Oblast between 1891 and 1914.

Table 2. System of Public Education in Don Host Oblast in 1891–1914 ([RGIA. F. 733. Op. 207. D. 30. L. 1](#))

Year	Population	Number of schools	Number of students	Number of residents per student
1891	2,078,878	362	47,271	44
1901	2,629,752	1,844	114,024	24
1910	2,987,635	2,234	172,860	18
1914	3,445,908	2,596	206,786	17

It must be noted that the 1914 figure of one student per 17 residents of the oblast was equal to the average among the country’s 11 Cossack hosts ([RGIA. F. 733. Op. 207. D. 30. L. 1](#)). Viewed over time, in the period 1891–1910 the figure had always been below the average (1891 – 41, 1901 – 23, and 1910 – 19). But in 1914 the region managed to match the average, which is testimony to its success in developing the education sector.

Let us now take a look at the region’s primary education sector. By 1914, educational institutions in the Don Host Oblast had a combined enrollment of 206,786 students, with 199,706 of those attending primary school ([RGIA. F. 733. Op. 207. D. 30. L. 1](#)). At that time, the region had 245,409 school-age children (ages 8 to 11) ([RGIA. F. 733. Op. 207. D. 39. L. 1](#)). Thus, in 1914 primary school was attended in the region by 81.3% of its school-age children. Taking into consideration the gender distribution in the region’s school sector under the purview of the Ecclesiastical Department, we can, with a degree of confidence, assume that school was attended by nearly all boys and the majority of girls in the school-age population.

Finally, it can be added that the region’s system of public education continued its development during World War I, with the Russian government intending to have implemented universal access to education as early as by 1918 ([Cherkasov, 2011: 147](#)).

5. Conclusion

The system of public education in Don Host Oblast saw much success during the imperial period. Both genders there had access to all the levels of education, including higher education. As early as 1914, the combined number of educational institutions in the region was above 2,500, and the combined number of students there was over 206,000. The government of Don Host

Oblast achieved significant success in primary education, with more than 80% of the region's school-age children going to school in 1914.

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