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## The System of Public Education in Kursk Governorate (1808–1917). Part 1

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### Abstract

This work examines the system of public education in Kursk Governorate in 1808–1917. This is its first part. It covers the period 1808–1900.

The principal sources used for this study are *The Most Faithful Report of the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod* for 1900, the *Memorandum Books* for Kursk Governorate, and the annual statistical digest *Overview of Kursk Governorate*. Methodologically, the work relies upon the following fundamental historical principles: historicism, systematicity, and objectivity.

The study's findings revealed that the system of public education in Kursk Governorate traces its origins to 1808, when Kursk Male Gymnasium was established. However, up until the abolition of serfdom in the country in 1861 the region's achievements in the area were negligible. In 1861, the preconditions were created for the opening of the first female gymnasium in the region. Following the launch of the Zemstvo Reform of 1864, the region entered a period of brisk activity in terms of the establishment of educational institutions under the purview of the Ministry of Public Education, and in 1886 a similar process began there with educational institutions run by the Holy Synod. Consequently, by 1900 Kursk Governorate had across the three principal education levels (secondary, lower, and primary) a total of 853 ministerial educational institutions with a combined enrollment of 70,619 students, whereas the region's education sector run by the Holy Synod numbered a total of 856 primary schools with a combined enrollment of 35,538 students.

**Keywords:** system of public education, Kursk Governorate, period 1808–1900, gymnasiums, primary schools, parochial schools.

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### 1. Introduction

Kursk Governorate was one of the more populous regions of the Russian Empire in the 19th century. Based on the Census of 1897, it had a population of nearly 2.4 million people, of whom around 200,000 resided in cities. In this respect, Kursk Governorate ranked 14th among the country's 89 governorates and oblasts (Naselenie imperii, 1898: 27-29). One of the region's first educational institutions (a male gymnasium) was established in its capital, Kursk, in 1808, which may be considered the time when the process of the making and development of the region's system of public education was officially launched. This part of the work examines the period up to 1900.

### 2. Materials and methods

The principal sources used for this study are *The Most Faithful Report of the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod* for 1900 (Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1903), the *Memorandum Books* for Kursk Governorate (Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1890; Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1894), and the annual statistical digest *Overview of Kursk Governorate* (Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1901).

Methodologically, the work relies upon the following fundamental historical principles: historicism, systematicity, and objectivity. The use of these principles helped explore the development of the system of public education in Kursk Governorate in the period 1808–1917 in a historical sequence, systematize the existing material across the major education levels (secondary, lower, and primary), and analyze the events under examination through the lens of a significant amount of relevant material.

### 3. Discussion

The historiography on the subject may be split into the following two thematic groups: 1) the research devoted to the actual system of public education in Kursk Governorate; 2) the research devoted to the Kharkov Educational District, which Kursk Governorate was part of.

The first group includes the following sources: the work by V.O. Kalnin on the making and development of the system of parochial and zemstvo schools in Kursk Governorate in the 19th century (Kapnin, 2021), the two works by M.N. Vetchinova on Kursk Male Gymnasium and Kursk Mariinsky Female Gymnasium (Vetchinova, 2018; Vetchinova, 2014), the work by Ye.A. Antonenko devoted to the educational and charitable activity of the region's female monasteries in the early 20th centuries (Antonenko, 2014), the work by A.I. Chernyshev and V.I. Sviridov on the activity of the Kursk authorities with regard to the development of out-of-school education (Chernyshev, Sviridov, 2015), the work by N.N. Cherkasova on the establishment and funding of zemstvo schools in the region (Cherkasova, 2004; Cherkasova, 2004a), the work by A.A. Titova on the influence of public education on the daily life of Kursk Governorate residents during the prerevolutionary period (Titova, 2013), the work by T.P. Mamaeva on the role of the Kursk Zemstvo in the development of public education in the region (Mamaeva, 2011), the work by D.B. Mikhaylov on the organization of educational work at parochial schools within the Kursk Diocese during the imperial period (Mikhailov, 2012), and, lastly, the work by V.V. Korovin and A.V. Romanov on the development of the system of public education in the region during World War I (Korovin, Romanov, 2014).

The second group includes the following sources: the works by S.I. Degtyarev and colleagues on the institution of honorary supervisors within the system of public education in the Russian Empire in the first half of the 20th century (through the example of the Kharkov Educational District) (Degtyarev, Polyakova, 2020; Degtyarev et al., 2020), the work by A.A. Cherkasov and colleagues on the system of public education in Voronezh Governorate during the prerevolutionary period (Cherkasov et al., 2020; Cherkasov et al., 2020a), and the works by A.Yu. Peretyatko and colleagues on public education in the Don region (Peretyatko, Zulfugarzade, 2017; Peretyatko, Zulfugarzade, 2017a; Peretyatko, Zulfugarzade, 2019; Peretyatko, Zulfugarzade, 2019a; Peretyatko, Zulfugarzade, 2019a; Peretyatko, Svechnikov, 2022).

Overall, it may be stated that the above research explores the system of public education in Kursk Governorate in the prerevolutionary period only fragmentarily. The present work aims to fill these gaps.

#### 4. Results

The present paper will explore the system of public education in Kursk Governorate across the three principal education levels – secondary, lower, and primary. Each level is examined below in detail.

##### Secondary education

The first secondary educational institution in Kursk Governorate was established on February 23, 1808. It was Kursk Male Gymnasium (Vetchinova, 2018: 207). This school long remained the only secondary educational institution in the region. There were several reasons behind this, including a lack of demand for secondary education in the region and, most importantly, its underdeveloped primary and lower education sectors. Radical changes in this area took place right after the abolition of serfdom in Russia in 1861. More specifically, more than 50 years later, on December 6, 1861, Kursk became home to the region's first first-class female educational institution, which on February 3, 1871, was reorganized into Mariinsky Female Gymnasium (Vetchinova, 2014: 134). Thus, in 1871 secondary education became accessible in the region to women as well. In 1873, the region became home to Kursk Real School. In 1884, Kursk also became home to the region's first private female gymnasium of O.N. Krasovskaya.

As at 1888, Kursk Governorate had an entire network of secondary educational institutions, which included male gymnasiums and progymnasiums, female gymnasiums and progymnasiums, Kursk Real School, a teacher's institute, a teacher's seminary, and a zemstvo teacher's school (Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1890: vedomost' o chisle zavedenii). By 1892, the number of secondary educational institutions in the region reduced by one, which was the result of merging the region's zemstvo teacher's school and teacher's seminary into what would become the zemstvo teacher's seminary (Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1894: 262).

In the period up to 1900, Kursk became home to a feldsher school, a charity school for boys, and the region's second female gymnasium. In addition, the two female progymnasiums in the cities of Rylsk and Sudzha were reorganized into female gymnasiums (Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1901: vedomost' № 6). Table 1 displays the data on the region's secondary educational institutions in the period 1888–1900.

**Table 1.** Secondary Educational Institutions in Kursk Governorate in 1888–1900 (Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1890: vedomost' o chisle zavedenii; Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1894: 262-263; Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1901: vedomost' № 6)

Year	Type of educational institution							Total	Total number of students		
	Gymnasium		Progymnasium		Real school	Surveyor's school; charity schools for girls and boys; feldsher school	Teacher's institute; teacher's seminary; teacher's school		Boys	Girls	Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female							
1888	3	3	1	11	1	2	3	24	1,354	2,073	3,427
1892	3	3	1	11	1	2	2	23	1,316	2,175	3,491
1900	3	6	1	9	1	4	2	26	1,947	3,779	5,726

As evidenced in Table 1, the number of secondary educational institutions in the region did not change much in the period 1888–1900. This was associated with the fact that in the period up to 1888 Kursk Governorate became home to a large number of secondary schools. By 1900, the region's secondary educational institutions began to be overfilled with students. Whereas in 1888

there, on average. were 142 students per secondary educational institution in the region, the figure rose to 220 in 1900. It is also worth noting that the region had a significant gender imbalance at the time – whereas in 1888 girls attending secondary educational institutions in the region accounted for 61 % of all students, their percentage rose in 1900 to 66 %, i.e. two-thirds.

### Lower education

In the period up to 1900, the country's lower education sector typically comprised uyezd, urban, and tradesman's schools. By 1888, the governorate had an entire network of such educational institutions (9 uyezd three-grade schools, 5 urban four-grade schools, and 1 vocational lower educational institution (a tradesman's specialized school)) ([Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1890: vedomost' o chisle zavedenii](#)).

In the period from 1888 to 1892, the above network did not change. However, in the period from 1892 to 1900 Kursk Governorate became home to its first tradesman's school ([Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1901: vedomost' № 6](#)). [Table 2](#) displays the data on the region's lower educational institutions in 1888–1900.

**Table 2.** Ministerial Primary Educational Institutions in Kursk Governorate in 1888–1900 ([Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1890: vedomost' o chisle zavedenii](#); [Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1894: 262-263](#); [Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1901: vedomost' № 6](#))

Year	Type of educational institution			Total	Number of students		
	Urban school	Uyezd school	Tradesman's specialized school; tradesman's school		Boys	Girls	Total
1888	5	9	1	15	1,343	-	1,343
1892	5	9	1	15	1,376	-	1,376
1900	5	9	2	16	1,989	-	1,989

As evidenced in [Table 2](#), by 1900 lower education in Kursk Governorate was concentrated in cities (urban schools) and uyezds (uyezd schools). There were also two vocational tradesman's educational institutions (the specialized school and the regular school). In the period from 1888 to 1900, the region witnessed only a small rise in the number of lower educational institutions. However, just as in the case of secondary educational institutions, the region witnessed a gradual increase in the size of the student body in the sector. More specifically, in 1888 there were 89 students per lower educational institution, whilst in 1900 there were now 124 students. It is worth noting that the region's lower educational institutions were attended back then by boys only.

### Primary education

#### *Primary educational institutions under the purview of the Ministry of Public Education*

One of the first primary educational institutions in Kursk Governorate was established no later than 1837. It was Olkhovka Primary School in Dmitriyevsky Uyezd ([Narodnoe nachal'noe obrazovanie..., 1897: 7](#)). Two years later, in 1839, schools were opened in the sloboda of Pogorelovka and the village of Bobryshevo. In the early 1850s, a school was opened in the village of Cherepovka. In the early 1850s, the sloboda of Novostroyevka became home to another primary school ([Narodnoe nachal'noe obrazovanie..., 1897: 7, 9](#)). In addition, in the period up to the abolition of serfdom in 1861 there were a few other primary schools in the region – e.g., one in the village of Nikolskoye in Belgorodsky Uyezd, one in the village of Solokhino in Grayvoronsky Uyezd, one in the sloboda of Krasny Kut in the same uyezd, one in the sloboda of Krasnaya Yaruga in the same uyezd, and one in the supernumerary town of Khotmyzhensk ([Narodnoe nachal'noe obrazovanie..., 1897: 7](#)). Besides, there obviously were schools in Kursk and other major cities of

the governorate and quite a number of schools in the rural area. Based on available data, the region had a total of 25 functional schools before the abolition of serfdom ([Narodnoe nachal'noe obrazovanie..., 1897: 17](#)).

However, despite the significant increase in the number of primary educational institutions in the region in the period up to the abolition of serfdom, the condition of those schools and the level of instruction in them left much to be desired. Quite often, as was the case throughout European Russia at the time, teaching was performed by members of the clergy, retired petty officers, and graduates of ecclesiastical seminaries. Schools were often located in places not suited for the purpose (e.g., the back regions of manors). Some schools were mobile – i.e., classes were held at the houses of actual students, with each student making their house available for the purpose for one week.

Following the abolition of serfdom and the launch of the Zemstvo Reform, public education was given a significant amount of attention. Kursk Governorate witnessed a sharp increase in the number of educational institutions, including in places populated by numerous children of school age. As early as 1868, the number of primary schools in Kursk Governorate run by the Ministry of Public Education alone (there also were schools run by the Holy Synod) surpassed 100 (117 schools). In 1870, the figure surpassed 200 (218). In 1874, it surpassed 300 (347). Two years later, in 1876, the figure surpassed 400 (404). As early as the following year, which was marked by the Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878), the government sharply cut spending on public education. Consequently, the figure surpassed 500 only in 1885 (508 schools). Table 3 displays the data on the region's primary educational institutions under the purview of the Ministry of Public Education in 1888–1900.

**Table 3.** Primary Educational Institutions Under the Purview of the Ministry of Public Education in Kursk Governorate in 1888–1900 ([Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1890: vedomost' o chisle zavedenii; Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1894: 262-263; Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1901: vedomost' №6](#))

Year	Type of educational institution				Total	Number of students		
	Model school	Private school	Urban parish school	Rural primary school		Boys	Girls	Total
1888	25	33	30	495	583	33,444	5,059	38,503
1892	24	39	33	511	607	38,386	7,486	42,872
1900	49	23	41	698	811	50,719	12,185	62,904

As evidenced in [Table 3](#), there was a sharp increase in the number of primary educational institutions in the region. From 1888 to 1900 their number increased 25 % (from 583 to 811 schools), with the size of the student body in this sector growing 40 %. During the period under review, the region witnessed an increase in the number of model, urban, and rural schools, whereas the number of private schools there declined, as they were unable to withstand competition from the public sector. In terms of the gender composition of the student body in this sector, in 1888 girls accounted for just 13 % of all students. The figure rose to 19 % in 1900. We can also see that the region gradually witnessed an increase in the average number of students per school: in 1888 – 66, in 1892 – 70, and in 1900 – 77 students.

#### *Primary educational institutions under the purview of the Holy Synod*

For a long time, the role of the Orthodox Church in the development of public education in the region was only minimal. However, in 1886 the government provided the Holy Synod with some funding toward the establishment of a network of parochial schools. This resulted in the creation of the Kursk Diocesan School Council. In the period up to 1917, this institution would be



concerned with the establishment of schools, control over their activity, staffing matters, etc. (Kapnin, 2021: 65).

The region's educational institutions created by the Kursk Diocesan School Council were divided into two-grade, one-grade, and literacy schools. The operation of the literacy school sector was of an impermanent nature, with such schools tending to open up in places where there resided few children of school age.

Table 4 displays the data on the region's primary educational institutions under the purview of the Holy Synod in the period in 1888–1900.

**Table 4.** Primary Educational Institutions Under the Purview of the Holy Synod in Kursk Governorate in 1888–1900 (Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1890: vedomost' o chisle zavedenii; Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1894: 262-263; Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1903: 64-65)

Year	Type of school			Total	Number of students		
	Two-grade	One-grade	Literacy school		Boys	Girls	Total
1888	357			357	8,740	695	9,435
1892	518			518	16,291	2,432	18,723
1900	9	445	402	856	25,706	9,832	35,538

As evidenced in Table 4, the region witnessed brisk development in its education sector run by the Holy Synod, which was associated with the provision of funding by the government toward parochial schools and literacy schools there. In the period 1888–1900, the number of such educational institutions in the region doubled, with the number of students increasing nearly 4 times. Of particular note is the gender composition of the student body in this sector. Whereas in 1888 the number of girls was 7.3 % and in 1892 it was 13 %, in 1900 the figure reached a record 27.6 % (i.e., over a fourth of the total number of students).

In addition, in 1888 the region had an entire fleet of ecclesiastical educational institutions run by the Holy Synod, including Kursk Ecclesiastical Seminary, several ecclesiastical schools (Kursk, Belgorod, Stary Oskol, Oboyan, and Rylsk), the diocesan female school in Kursk, the school at the Belgorod Female Monastery, and the two charity schools in Kursk (Pamyatnaya knizhka, 1890: vedomost' o chisle zavedenii). Since these educational institutions were not secular, no data on them were included in the table.

## 5. Conclusion

The system of public education in Kursk Governorate traces its origins to 1808, when Kursk Male Gymnasium was established. However, up until the abolition of serfdom in the country in 1861 the region's achievements in the area were negligible. In 1861, the preconditions were created for the opening of the first female gymnasium in the region. Following the launch of the Zemstvo Reform of 1864, the region entered a period of brisk activity in terms of the establishment of educational institutions under the purview of the Ministry of Public Education, and in 1886 a similar process began there with educational institutions run by the Holy Synod. Consequently, by 1900 Kursk Governorate had across the three principal education levels (secondary, lower, and primary) a total of 853 ministerial educational institutions with a combined enrollment of 70,619 students, whereas the region's education sector run by the Holy Synod numbered a total of 856 primary schools with a combined enrollment of 35,538 students.

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