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## The System of Public Education in Kursk Governorate (1808–1917). Part 2

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### Abstract

This paper is the second part of a study focused on the system of public education in Kursk Governorate in 1808–1917. It covers the period 1900–1917.

The primary sources used for this work are archival sources and collections of published documents. The first group is represented by the Russian State Historical Archive (Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation), more specifically records from the Ministry of Public Education containing the numbers of school-age children (ages 8–11) and students as at January 1, 1915, across the regions of the Russian Empire. The second group includes the annual statistical digest *Overview of Kursk Governorate*, *The Most Faithful Report of the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod*, and certain statistical materials on educational institutions in Kursk Governorate.

The study's findings revealed that the system of public education in Kursk Governorate experienced in 1900–1917 a period of dynamic development. During this period, the region witnessed a sharp increase in the number of secondary educational institutions, with all cities, including uyezd ones, and even some villages, there reached with secondary education. The region's lower education sector witnessed an improvement in the quality of education through a reorganization of uyezd schools into urban ones, and in 1903 there began a real boom in the opening of vocational schools. However, the biggest success was achieved in the region's primary education sector, where school was attended by 1916 by 80 % of its school-age children.

**Keywords:** system of public education, Kursk Governorate, period 1900–1917, gymnasiums, primary schools, parochial schools, sustainable development in education,

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education policy, education reform.

### **1. Introduction**

At the beginning of the 20th century, Kursk Governorate was part of one of the more progressive educational districts in the Russian Empire – Kharkov Educational District, which also included Voronezh, Penza, Tambov, and Kharkov Governorates and Don Host Oblast. In 1897, this area had a population of more than 14.2 million ([Naselenie imperii..., 1898: 27-29](#)), ranking third among the country's educational districts in population size, behind the Kiev Educational District (14.7 million) by a small margin and the first-ranked Moscow Educational District (17.9 million) ([Naselenie imperii..., 1898](#)). This part of the work explores the system of public education in Kursk Governorate in the period from 1900 to 1917.

### **2. Materials and methods**

The primary sources used for this work are archival sources and collections of published documents. The first group is represented by the Russian State Historical Archive (Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation), more specifically records from the Ministry of Public Education containing the numbers of school-age children (ages 8–11) and students as at 1 January 1, 1915, across the regions of the Russian Empire. The second group includes the annual statistical digest *Overview of Kursk Governorate, The Most Faithful Report of the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod*, and certain statistical materials on educational institutions in Kursk Governorate ([Uchebnye zavedeniya..., 1911](#)).

Methodologically, the work relies on a set of fundamental historical principles (historicism, systematicity, and objectivity). Use was made of research methods such as the statistical method, which is central to conducting historical-statistical research, the content analysis method, which is central to gathering and verifying information, and the retrospective method, which is central to examining the relevant events in their historical sequence. The use of the above principles and methods helped develop a comprehensive insight into the system of public education in Kursk Governorate at the beginning of the 20th century.

### **3. Discussion**

The historiography of the subject under discussion can be divided into two thematic groups: 1) the research devoted to the actual system of public education in Kursk Governorate; 2) the research devoted to the activity of the Kharkov Educational District and other educational districts in the Russian Empire at the beginning of the 20th century.

The first group includes, in addition to those mentioned in the study's first part ([Rajović et al., 2023](#)), the following works: the work by V.V. Korovin and A.V. Romanov, which explores the development of the system of public education in Kursk Governorate during World War I ([Korovin, Romanov, 2014](#)), and the article by T.L. Kononova, which explores zemstvo public libraries in the period between the late 19th and early 20th centuries ([Kononova, 2020](#)).

The second group includes the following works focused on the beginning of the 20th century: the one by A.A. Cherkasov and his colleagues, which explores the system of public education in Voronezh Governorate, Kharkov Educational District ([Cherkasov et al., 2020](#)), the one by A.M. Mamadaliyev and his colleagues, which explores the system of public education in Penza Governorate, Kharkov Educational District ([Mamadaliyev et al., 2022](#)), the one by O.V. Natolochnaya and her colleagues, which explores the system of public education in Vilna Governorate, Vilna Educational District ([Natolochnaya et al., 2020](#)), and the one by V.S. Molchanova and her colleagues, which explores the development of primary education in Kuban Oblast, Caucasus Educational District ([Molchanova et al., 2020](#)).

### **4. Results**

As at 1900, the system of public education in Kursk Governorate was represented by an extensive network of educational institutions, which comprised 26 secondary, 16 lower, and 1,667 primary educational institutions (811 schools under the purview of the Ministry of Public Education and 856 schools under the purview of the Holy Synod) ([Rajović et al., 2023: 259-266](#)).

### Secondary education

As at 1900, Kursk Governorate had 26 secondary educational institutions, with a combined enrollment of 1,947 boys and 3,779 girls (Rajović et al., 2023: 259-266). Subsequently, there were increases in the numbers of secondary educational institutions and students in them in the region. Specifically, as early as 1902, while the number of secondary educational institutions in the region did not increase, the number of students in this sector increased nearly 20%, from 5,726 to 6,823 (Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1903: vedomost' № 7). By 1904, the number of female gymnasiums and progymnasiums in the region increased by another two, to 17 educational institutions (Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1905: vedomost' 7).

By 1906, three male educational institutions were opened in the region – two private real schools in Kursk and Stary Oskol and a private male progymnasium in Grayvoron. On the other hand, a large portion of the region's female progymnasiums were reorganized into female gymnasiums, with their total number there reaching 12 (Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1907: prilozhenie № 8). In addition, Kursk became home to a private school for training female teachers (Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1907: prilozhenie № 8).

By 1908, the number of students in the region's secondary education sector surpassed 10,000, with more than two thirds of this student body being accounted for by females (Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1909: prilozhenie № 9).

By 1914, the region had two teacher's seminaries (one in Kursk and the other in Sudzha) and a teacher's institute (Belgorod) (Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1915: prilozhenie № 9). By 1915, Kursk Governorate had secondary educational institutions for boys and those serving girls in all its cities and uyezds, and even in some of its villages (e.g., Borisovka) (Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1916: prilozhenie № 9).

Table 1 displays the data on secondary educational institutions and students in them in Kursk Governorate in the period 1900–1915.

**Table 1.** Secondary Educational Institutions in Kursk Governorate in 1900–1915 (Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1901: vedomost' № 6; Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1903: vedomost' № 7; Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1905: vedomost' № 7; Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1907: prilozhenie № 8; Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1909: prilozhenie № 9; Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1911: prilozhenie № 9; Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1912: prilozhenie № 9; Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1915: prilozhenie № 9; Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1916: prilozhenie № 9)

Year	Type of educational institution							Total	Total number of students		
	Gymnasium		Progymnasium		Real school	Surveyor's school; charity school for girls and boys; feldsher school	Teacher's institute; teacher's seminary; teacher's school		Boys	Girls	Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female							
1900	3	6	1	9	1	4	2	26	1,947	3,779	5,726
1902	3	6	1	9	1	2	2	24	2,421	4,402	6,823
1904	3	6	1	11	1	2	2	26	2,763	5,492	8,255
1906	3	12	2	6	3	2	2	30	2,816	6,630	9,446
1908	4	15	2	6	6	2	2	37	3,281	7,152	10,433
1910	5	19	1	3	7	2	2	39	3,787	7,757	11,544
1914	5	21	1	1	7	2	3	40	4,258	8,425	12,683
1915	7	22	-	-	7	2	3	41	4,831	9,467	14,298

As evidenced in Table 1, in the period from 1900 to 1915, the number of secondary educational institutions in the region increased from 26 to 41, while the size of the student body in

this sector increased nearly 3 times – from 5,700 to 14,200. The sharp increase in the size of the student body was, on one hand, due to an elevation in the status of such educational institutions (in 1900, the region had 10 progymnasiums; in 1915, all of them were reorganized into gymnasiums), and, on the other hand, due to an increase in the number of students attending the schools (e.g., Mariinsky Kursk Female Gymnasium had an enrollment of 1,143 in 1915 versus 488 in 1902). The region's secondary education sector was characterized by a gender imbalance, with girls accounting for 66 % as at 1900. In the following 15 years, despite the opening of a large number of male educational institutions in the region, girls continued to account for the majority of students in its secondary education sector.

#### *Lower education*

Despite the already large number of lower educational institutions in the region, the period under review witnessed a further increase in that figure. Of note is the fact that most of the newly-established schools were of a vocational nature and such schools were being opened throughout Kursk Governorate.

More specifically, in 1901 an educational icon workshop was opened in the village of Borisovka, Grayvoron Uyezd, by the Committee for the Care of Russian Icon Painting. The workshop was concerned with training iconographers and muralists, providing students with education in artistic icon painting. The program of study was 4 years long. In 1910, the school had an enrollment of 20 students; by that time, it had graduated 20 masters ([Uchebnye zavedeniya..., 1911: 5](#)). That same year, Novooskolsky Uyezd became home to Konshino School for Cattle-Farm Workers in the village of Konshino. This educational institution was concerned with training specialists for raising and looking after cattle (this included teaching one to provide basic first aid assistance to animals). Its curriculum for instruction in general-education subjects was similar to that of a public school. The program of study was 3 years long – 2 years of in-school theoretical learning, and then 1 year of practical training on a farm. In 1910, the school had an enrollment of 15 students ([Uchebnye zavedeniya..., 1911: 6-7](#)). Concurrently, there took place a reorganization of the region's three-grade uyezd schools into four-grade urban schools ([Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1903: vedomost' № 7](#)).

In 1903, the city of Rylsk became home to an urban school of commerce. It had four grades (a preparatory grade and three core grades). In 1910, the school had an enrollment of 72 students ([Uchebnye zavedeniya..., 1911: 7](#)).

In 1903, the city of Sudzha became home to a school of weaving under the purview of the Sudzha Uyezd Zemstvo. Its program of study was 2 years long. In 1910, it had an enrollment of 11 female students, with the total number of its graduates being 22 at the time ([Uchebnye zavedeniya..., 1911: 8](#)). That same year, 1903, the town of Tim became home to Tim Lower Trades School. Students who completed the entire program of study there would receive the title of Apprentice, and those who completed a three-year practical training program there afterwards would be granted the title of Master. The school had a 4-year program of study. In 1910, it had an enrollment of 49 students ([Uchebnye zavedeniya..., 1911: 11](#)).

In 1903, the city of Shchigry became home to a zemstvo school of female labor. It was focused on the development of carpet manufacture and lacemaking via the training of corresponding specialists. The school had a 2-year program of study. In 1910, it had an enrollment of 51 female students ([Uchebnye zavedeniya..., 1911: 11](#)). That same year, the village of Nizhny Terebuzh became home to the Terebuzh Practical School of Horticulture of K.F. Orzhelsky. This educational institution had a 4-year program of study. It graduates would receive the title of Horticulture Practitioner. In 1910, the school had an enrollment of 12 ([Uchebnye zavedeniya..., 1911: 12](#)).

In 1905, the city of Rylsk became home to handiwork classes organized by a local society for aid to the poor. The focus was on helping disadvantaged female students gain handiwork skills sufficient to earn a living on their own. The operation of this educational institution was partly funded via the sale of items sewn by its students ([Uchebnye zavedeniya..., 1911: 8](#)).

In 1906, the town of Shebekino became home to Mariinsky Lower Agricultural School, established by the Main Directorate for Land Management and Arable Farming. The school had a 3-year program of study. In 1910, it had an enrollment of 40 students ([Uchebnye zavedeniya..., 1911: 4](#)).

In 1907, the city of Korocho became home to a practical school of horticulture. Concerned with the training of specialists in the area of fruit and vegetable farming, it had a 3-year program of



study. In 1910, the school had an enrollment of 40 students (aged from 14 to 19). There were two workshops at it – basket and carpentry (Uchebnye zavedeniya..., 1911: 5-6).

In 1907, the city of Kursk became home to a rural trades educational workshop, established through the efforts of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. It was concerned with the training of workers who would help build an efficient agricultural sector, and its 3-year program of study would even enable one to gain skills in servicing and maintaining agricultural machinery. Graduates of this program would receive the title of Rural Master. As at January 1, 1910, the workshop had an enrollment of 40 boys (aged from 14 to 19) (Uchebnye zavedeniya..., 1911: 1).

That same year, 1907, Kursk became home to a school of commerce. Concerned with the training of a workforce for commercial-industrial institutions, it had a program of study comprised of a 4-year core program and a 2-year preparatory program. In 1910, the school had an enrollment of 191 students (Uchebnye zavedeniya..., 1911: 1-2). In addition, Kursk became home to accounting courses under the purview of the Ministry of Public Education, which functioned as a lower educational institution. This institution had a 1-year program of study. By 1910, it had graduated 18 students (Uchebnye zavedeniya..., 1911: 2).

Around the same time, three workshops – carpentry, bindery, and metalworking – were established at Kursk Teacher's Seminary. It was a 3-year program of study. In 1910, each of the workshops had an enrollment of one, with the ages ranging from 16 to 22 years (Uchebnye zavedeniya..., 1911: 2). Kursk also had in operation the vocational courses of Madame Bobrishcheva-Pushkina, concerned with the training of teachers of handiwork, crafts, and fancywork (Uchebnye zavedeniya..., 1911: 2-3).

In 1907, the city of Belgorod became home to a vocational trades female school of sewing, focused on the development of skills in cutting and sewing dresses, linen, upper garments, and hats. The school operated on funding from tuition (30 rubles per year). By 1910, it had an enrollment of 55 female students. It had four grades, with the last one concerned with instruction in a specialized craft (Uchebnye zavedeniya..., 1911: 3).

In 1908, Ye.Ye. Mironova established another vocational trades female school of sewing in Kursk Uyezd. It had a 2-year program of study. Just like the Belgorod school, it operated on funding from tuition (36 rubles per year). In 1910, the school had an enrollment of 26 female students (Uchebnye zavedeniya..., 1911: 3-4).

Belgorod Uyezd became home to a basket workshop, established at Maslovoye Zemstvo Primary School in the village of Maslovaya Pristan. It had a 1-year program of study and was attended by students of the above school (aged from 9 to 15) (Uchebnye zavedeniya..., 1911: 4).

In 1909, Kursk became home to a school of shoemaking and tailoring, established through the efforts of the Ministry of Trade and Industry. In 1910, the school had an enrollment of 27 boys (aged from 12 to 15) (Uchebnye zavedeniya..., 1911: 1).

The data on this sector are displayed in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Lower Educational Institutions in Kursk Governorate in 1900–1915 (Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1901: vedomost' № 6; Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1903: vedomost' № 7; Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1905: vedomost' № 7; Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1907: prilozhenie № 8; Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1909: prilozhenie № 9; Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1911: prilozhenie № 9; Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1915: prilozhenie № 9; Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1916: prilozhenie № 9)

Year	Type of educational institution			Total	Number of students		
	Urban school; higher primary school	Uyezd school; commercial school; agricultural school	Trades specialized school; trades school		Boys	Girls	Total
1900	5	9	2	16	1,989	-	1,989
1902	15	-	2	17	2,074	-	2,074
1904	15	-	3	18	2,061	-	2,061
1906	15	9	5	29	2,627	-	2,627

1908	15	11	12	38	2,568	150	2,718
1910	16	10	15	41	2,976	179	3,155
1914	43	12	21	76	3,628	373	4,001
1915	18	12	22	52	3,953	364	4,317

As evidenced in [Table 2](#), the region's lower education sector continued its brisk development during the 15-year period from 1900 to 1915. First all of the uyezd schools were reorganized into urban schools, and later the region witnessed the establishment of vocational schools of varying types on a large scale. In the period under review, the number of schools in this sector increased more than 3 times. The largest increase took place in 1914 – to 76 lower educational institutions. The decline in their number to 52 in 1915 may have been caused by the enlargement of the student body attending the region's higher primary schools. This is supported by the fact that, despite the decline in the number of schools in this sector in 1915, the size of its student body continued to increase (1914 – 4,001 students; 1915 – 4,317 students).

### Primary education

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

By 1900, the total number of ministerial primary educational institutions in the region reached 811. [Table 3](#) displays the data on this particular sector.

**Table 3.** Primary Educational Institutions Under the Purview of the Ministry of Public Education in Kursk Governorate in 1900–1915 ([Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1901: vedomost' №6](#); [Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1903: vedomost' № 7](#); [Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1905: vedomost' № 7](#); [Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1907: prilozhenie № 8](#); [Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1909: prilozhenie № 9](#); [Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1911: prilozhenie № 9](#); [Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1915: prilozhenie № 9](#); [Obzor Kurskoi gubernii, 1916: prilozhenie № 10-11](#))

Year	Type of educational institution				Total	Number of students		
	Model school; two-grade school	Private school	Urban parish school	Rural primary school		Boys	Girls	Total
1900	49	23	41	698	811	50,719	12,185	62,904
1902	22	29	42	763	856	51,268	13,765	65,033
1904	61	3	942		1,006	61,750	17,597	79,347
1906	33	3	40	1,038	1,114	68,455	21,303	89,758
1908	38	5	40	1,135	1,218	71,337	22,889	94,226
1910	48	6	40	1,246	1,340	74,628	27,384	102,012
1914	47	6	41	1,611	1,705	84,006	37,151	121,157
1915	61	13	40	1,648	1,762	89,378	46,028	135,406

As evidenced in [Table 3](#), the government continued its efforts to ramp up the number of primary educational institutions under the purview of the Ministry of Public Education. As early as 1910, the number of students in this sector surpassed 100,000, and there was a twofold increase in the number of primary schools in the region in 1913. There was a sharp increase in the number of primary schools in the region's rural areas, nearly 2.5 times, whereas there was only a small increase in the figure in its cities, which was associated with the latter getting filled with primary and other types of educational institutions back before 1900. The sharp increase in the number of primary educational institutions in the region facilitated an increase in the number of school-age children reached with education. Assuming that the school-age boy to girl ratio in the region was 1:1, in 1900 there were 4 boys attending school per girl, i.e. girls attending school accounted for a fifth of the region's students. In 1915, there was a sharp increase in the number of girls attending

school and there now were 2 boys per girl, i.e. girls accounted now for a third of the region's total number of students.

As regards private educational institutions in the region, their role was minor and this sector was characterized by impermanence.

Of note is the fact that the number of primary educational institutions in the region continued to grow during World War I. According to V.V. Korovin and A.V. Romanov, 42 educational institutions were opened in 1914, 19 in 1915, and 27 in 1916 (Korovin, Romanov, 2014: 165).

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

By 1900, Kursk Governorate had 856 educational institutions under the purview of the Holy Synod. There were almost equal numbers of one-grade schools and literacy schools in the region – 445 and 402, respectively. Subsequently, the Holy Synod put in significant efforts to make its network of educational institutions as sustainable as possible, with a focus on the gradual closing down of literacy schools and deploying in their place of full-fledged primary schools, with buildings and libraries of their own. The data on this sector are displayed in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Primary Educational Institutions Under the Purview of the Holy Synod in Kursk Governorate in 1900–1914 (Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1903: 64-65; Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1909: 118-128; Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1911: 214-219; Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1913: 200-203; Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1915: 200-205; Vsepoddanneishii otchet, 1916: 122-123)

Year	Type of school			Total	Number of students		
	Two-grade school	One-grade school	Literacy school		Boys	Girls	Total
1900	9	445	402	856	25,706	9,832	35,538
1903	6	589	370	965	28,852	14,244	43,096
1904	6	628	336	970	29,383	14,943	44,326
1908	12	702	181	895	29,577	15,930	45,507
1909	12	702	181	895	29,577	15,930	45,507
1912	12	875	12	899	29,561	18,579	48,140
1913	13	891	5	903	29,654	19,364	49,018
1914	12	905	1	918	30,273	21,204	51,477

As evidenced in Table 4, by 1914 the Holy Synod had virtually completed work on replacing literacy schools with one-grade educational institutions. The period under review did not witness a significant increase in the number of educational institutions, which suggests that the number of schools established by the Holy Synod in the region in the period up to 1900 was close to the highest there. Nevertheless, the number of students increased nearly 70 % – from 35,500 to 51,400.

In terms of the gender balance in this sector in Kursk Governorate, primary schools under the purview of the Holy Synod were traditionally attended by more girls than those under the purview of the Ministry of Public Education. Specifically, in 1900 girls attending the region's parochial schools accounted for nearly 28 % (versus 20 % with its ministerial schools), and in 1915 the figure was now 41 % (versus 33 %). This indicates that reaching all school-age children with parochial school education required bringing the gender balance precisely to half, i.e. enrolling another 9,000 girls or so. This assertion is supported by the fact that from 1903 to 1915 the number of boys remained virtually unchanged, being in line with the slight population increase in the region, and that suggests that virtually 100% of the region's boys attended school where there were parochial schools in place.

Let us summarize what the system of public education in Kursk Governorate had achieved by the time the Russian Empire collapsed. According to the Ministry of Public Education, by January 1, 1915, the governorate had 291,429 school-age children, with 170,115 of these going to school (RGIA. F. 733. Op. 207. D. 39. L. 1). In addition, more than 51,000 children attended parochial schools. Thus, by 1915 school in the region was attended by 221,592 children, or 76 % of its school-age children. Considering that new educational institutions continued to open up in the region during the last prerevolutionary period, the figure may well have been as much as 80 % by the end of 1916.

## 5. Conclusion

The study's findings revealed that the system of public education in Kursk Governorate experienced in 1900–1917 a period of dynamic development. During this period, the region witnessed a sharp increase in the number of secondary educational institutions, with all cities, including uyezd ones, and even some villages, there reached with secondary education. The region's lower education sector witnessed an improvement in the quality of education through a reorganization of uyezd schools into urban ones, and in 1903 there began a real boom in the opening of vocational schools. However, the biggest success was achieved in the region's primary education sector, where school was attended by 1916 by 80% of its school-age children.

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