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Published in the Slovak Republic
European Journal of Contemporary Education
E-ISSN 2305-6746
2020, 9(1): 212-220
DOI: 10.13187/ejced.2020.1.212
www.ejournal1.com

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The Social Background of Functionaries in the Russian Empire's Public Education Sector in the First Half of the 19th century: The Case of the Ukrainian Governorates

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Abstract

This paper is focused on a specific component of the bureaucratic apparatus in the Russian Empire – educational functionaries. More specifically, the work explores the social background of educational functionaries in the Ukrainian lands in the first half of the 19th century. The authors composed data samples on Taurida, Volhynian, and Poltava Governorates covering the years 1830 and 1850. Use was made of a body of little-known archival documentation from the State Archive of Kharkov Oblast and the Central State Archive of Ukraine in Kiev.

The authors explored the regional characteristics of the way educational institutions in rightbank, leftbank, and southern Ukrainian governorates were staffed with functionaries. The work attempted to determine how the areas' numbers of members of the various social groups in pedagogical service correlate with each other. It was found that, despite the low popularity of pedagogical service among the nobility, there were quite many members of this estate serving in the public education sector. However, due to a major need for teacher functionaries the government had to express a favorable attitude toward the hiring of members of other social groups willing to serve in educational institutions across the Russian Empire. This explains the significant number of members of the lower estates employed in the sector as well.

Keywords: public education, Russian Empire, Ukraine, bureaucracy, estate, social background, teacher, pedagogical.

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1. Introduction

The public education sector plays an important part in the life of any country or community. It is this particular sector that has always been responsible for providing members of society with scholarly and practical knowledge, inculcating various social norms and ideologies in them, or having them develop various professional skills. Considering the significance of the above functions, the educational department is to be regarded as an essential component in the government apparatus.

In the period between the late 18th and 19th centuries, the system of education in the Russian Empire was wholly oriented toward serving the state. In doing so, it had been continually perfected. The sector's high political significance is also attested by the fact that every time the country's borders were expanded the Russian government not only put in place its administrative authorities in the new areas as a primary step but also strove to establish as many educational facilities for local youth as possible there. Thus, in any region newly incorporated into the empire there almost instantly was launched the process of educating youth in such a way as to nurture a citizen who would be loyal to the Russian state exclusively.

It goes without saying that, to ensure the proper operation of the educational sector, the state needed a properly selected and trained workforce of both teachers and administrative staff. In said period, the network of educational institutions in the Russian Empire expanded quite rapidly. The period witnessed the establishment of a large number of various schools and gymnasias and an increase in the number of institutions of higher learning. Accordingly, the state's need for pedagogical personnel at the time was substantial. The government would often dispatch to the empire's remote areas pedagogues from other regions (Degtyarev, 2016).

To attract the required number of people into pedagogical service, the government put forward a range of incentives. For instance, teachers and instructors were given the status of public officers. They could now work their way up the Table of Ranks and be entitled to various benefits (orders, cash bonuses, etc.). By obtaining through their service a certain rank or order, they could also acquire the right to personal or hereditary nobility in the Russian Empire. Yet, pedagogical service was not very popular among members of the noble estate. Due to a major need for teacher functionaries, the government had to express a more favorable attitude toward hiring members of less privileged social groups willing to work in the vineyards of the educational sector.

Under a monarchy in the Russian Empire, especially prior to the 1860–1880s reforms, service in the educational sector was for many members of the lower estates an opportunity to become part of the empire's bureaucratic apparatus and get into the privileged social-professional "caste" of functionaries.

In the context of the workforce of functionaries in the Russian Empire's public education sector, it is worth devoting special attention to the following three key components: (1) its place within the empire's bureaucratic apparatus; (2) the social background and status of functionaries at educational institutions; (3) their educational and professional levels and their duties and responsibilities.

2. Materials and methods

In putting this work together, the authors made extensive use of materials from the 'Kharkov University' repository of the State Archive of Kharkov Oblast (GAKhO. F. 667) and from the 'Office of the Trustee of the Kiev Educational District' repository of the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine in Kiev (TsGIAUK. F. 707).

Apart from insights from a number of researchers, the work's methodological basis is grounded in a set of general scholarly and special principles and methods. Specifically, these include general principles of inquiry such as the principles of historicism, systemicity, and objectivity. The use of these methods helped identify and analyze the gist of the issue under investigation and identify some of the key characteristics inherent to the regions of the Russian Empire under examination. The work also employed a set of cliometric methods for the purpose of identifying and analyzing a number of relevant quantitative indicators. A key principle used in this study is the principle of historical anthropologism, as the work's central focus is a certain human community, i.e. a bearer of specific values and traditions with a role to play in history.

3. Discussion

In pre-1917 Russian historiography, the periodical press and certain publications carried a large number of works devoted to the history of various institutions of lower, secondary, and higher education in the Russian Empire. The overwhelming majority of these works was of a descriptive nature and contained a lot of statistical material. There also were reference publications containing historical and biographical information. Yet, these works either did not cover the various aspects of teaching service or covered them only superficially.

Soviet scholars explored the history of particular educational institutions in the Russian Empire (Shishkova, 1979), with some also devoting attention to the social and quantitative characteristics of students at institutions of secondary and higher learning (Egorov, 1957; Kamosko, 1970; Ryabikova, 1974). In our time, these thematic areas continued to be investigated by A. Feofanov (Feofanov, 2006), E. Sysoeva (Sysoeva, 1998; Sysoeva, 2008), O. Travkina (Travkina, 2003), L. Korablina (Korablina, 2002), V. Kravchenko (Kravchenko, 2011), and some others.

Contemporary scholars have substantially expanded the spectrum of topics in the study of the system of public education in the Russian Empire. Keen interest has been expressed in the study of state policy regarding the regulation of the national education system and local education systems (Mantrov, 2007; Pivovarov, 2001; Magsumov et al., 2018; Cherkasov A. et al., 2019), the link between education and public service (Degtyarev, 2012; Degtyarev, 2013a; Degtyarev, 2013b; Degtyarev, 2016), the sociology of education (Shpak, 2008), and a few other aspects.

In contemporary historiography, the workforce in the Russian Empire's public education sector in the period between the late 18th and first half of the 19th centuries has rarely been the subject of special research, especially when it comes to regional-level personnel – instructors at parish schools, district schools, lyceums, gymnasia, and universities. An exception is research studies by Yu. Disson, V. Morozova, O. Serdyutskaya, V. Slotin, N. Firsova (Disson, 2008; Firsova, 2007; Morozova, 2007; Serdyutskaya, 2008; Slotin, 2010; Korilova, Magsumov, 2017), and some others.

4. Results

In the 19th century, the workforce of educational functionaries in the Russian Empire was now a social-professional group (inhomogeneous in estate background, age, and educational level) that provided for the operation of the public education sector by way of mental production and transfer of information (educating and nurturing youth) and performance of administrative functions (administration and reporting) (Slotin, 2010: 65). Therefore, despite the absence in their professional activity of bureaucratic duties (with minor exceptions), this category of functionaries is to be regarded as an indispensable part of the bureaucratic apparatus in the Russian Empire.

The emergence of teachership as a special category within society, a social group that would exist owing to its paid specialized professional work teaching youth, was associated with the reforms of Catherine II (Morozova, 2007: 58). In light of the need for the vocational training of teachers for public schools, it was necessary to establish their legal status and financial standing in keeping with the ideal image of the teacher that had formed in 18th century pedagogics. The Commission on the Establishment of Public Schools, headed by Count P. Zavadovsky, had to work on resolving this issue independently, as the Austrian legislation used as the basis for the school reform did not contain the necessary guidelines in relation to this.

The School Statute of 1786 did not establish the precise work status of public school teachers and was limited to providing that they were to be regarded as being in active public service and entitled to the same rights and privileges as other functionaries. However, putting these promises into effect in real life was not an easy task to accomplish. The thing is that during that period public school teachers were predominantly hired from a pool represented by members of the clergy, petty bourgeoisie, and other taxed estates, whereas public service, with all the privileges and benefits it offered, was considered a privilege of the nobility. Starting in the early 19th century, educational functionaries enjoyed all of the same rights and privileges as civil service officers. Even the official status of functionaries in the public education sector was defined by the Senate as functionaries in public service. According to Russian researcher V. Slotin, this was associated with the actual policy implemented by the monarchy – to prioritize the principle of service-based activity, whereby the job of all educational institutions was not only to educate young people but prepare them for service as well (Slotin, 2010: 64-65).

Thus, the public service workforce included both civil officers and science and education personnel. With that said, the spectrum of positions these individuals held was quite broad: from members of the Academy of Sciences to lab assistants or from professors to family tutors (mentors).

School functionaries made up a significant part of the bureaucratic apparatus in the first half of the 19th century. For instance, at February 1, 1850, in Poltava Governorate alone the local gubernial gymnasium and district schools had as many as 129 staff, with seven positions open to be filled (supervisors and teachers) (TsGIAUK. F. 707. Op. 16. D.66. L. 2-6). However, account should also be taken of personnel at the parish schools. Another body of archival data for the same year points to 40 teachers at these facilities (TsGIAUK. F. 707. Op. 16. D. 682). Thus, it may be assumed that, within the system of public education, depending on the number of educational institutions, each of the governorates had upwards of 150 pedagogical personnel on staff (governorates with institutions of higher learning in place had a lot more staff than that).

The elements of the composite portrait of the region's workforce of school functionaries should acquire a deeper meaning once you analyze its qualitative characteristics and their transformation as part of the implementation of the state's policy on public education. Conducting this kind of analysis is possible if you have on hand a system of theoretically grounded and tried-and-tested criteria and metrics for assessing the qualitative composition of the region's workforce of functionaries. These criteria may cover quite a broad spectrum of professional and personal qualities and psychophysical characteristics of staff in the government apparatus. It appears possible to explore the composition of the region's workforce of functionaries only across a relatively small number of characteristics, including rank, education, age, length of service, and social background. For the purposes of this work, the primary focus is on the last one – the social background of teacher functionaries.

As mentioned earlier, by social background, in the last quarter of the 18th century the bulk of teaching staff at most educational institutions in the Russian Empire was made up of members of the clergy. With the passage of time, based on a realization that this service is public too, with all the implications that it carried, attempts were made in government circles to restrict access to teaching posts for individuals from unprivileged strata of society. These attempts can be regarded as relatively unsuccessful, as the social makeup of pedagogical personnel kept being diverse compared with other departments (although it must be acknowledged that the share of members of the nobility did, however, increase over time).

In April of 1810, the newly appointed Minister of Public Education, A. Razumovsky, started virtually straightaway to support and promote the idea of staffing the schools based on preferential treatment for members of certain estates. The minister agreed with those who claimed that teaching was the only thing most school functionaries did, with many known only within the scholarly community. He also asserted that “school principals with neither a high rank nor an estate of their own do not stand to get very much respect ... By contrast, if principals were hired from among landowners, this would restore the trust of the nobility in these institutions and encourage the people to attend school”. Yet, it was clear that a change like that would result in a loss of opportunity for many potential principals. With this in mind, they created the so-called “institution of distinguished principals”, which was to help select principals who met the criteria formulated by the minister. In the Ukrainian lands incorporated into the Russian Empire as a result of the division of Rzeczpospolita, an attempt to have marszałeks (marshals of the nobility) attend exams in each district school was made back in 1804 (on an initiative of T. Chatsky), but the initiative was turned down by the administration of Vilna University. D. Bovua provides some data with regard to the social makeup of the pedagogical workforce in district schools and gymnasia within the Vilna Educational District in the early 19th century – “aside from a few foreigners, there were 500–600 instructors descended from szlachta families” (Bovua, 2007: 242-243). Thus, the issue of stratification amongst Rightbank Ukraine's workforce of school functionaries was not particularly topical.

The authors analyzed a body of documentation covering 44 school functionaries in Volhynian Governorate for the year 1832 (records of service, reports, and official correspondence). These were staff members whom the administration recommended for a number of class ranks for being in service for the required number of years. They represented the following nine educational institutions in Volhynian Governorate: Volhynian Lyceum, Międzyrzec Gymnasium, Międzyrzec District School, Lutsk District School, Klevan District School, Zhytomir District School, Berdychev District School, Vladimir District School, and Liubar District School. Nobles accounted for a large

share of this group – 41 out of the 44 functionaries. Two of the functionaries were descended from clergy and one from foreigners (GAKhO. F. 667. Op. 287. D. 122). In a sense, this was due to the fact that the region had one of the largest relative shares of the szlachta estate in Europe. Members of the szlachta themselves had quite a high level of education and treated public service (including pedagogical activity) as an honorable mission, sincerely believing it was their duty to fulfill it. Yet, over time the number of non-noble functionaries at educational institutions in the rightbank Ukrainian lands increased (as was the case with other sectors in the region as well). This was associated with the following two reasons:

1) The region’s institutions employed functionaries from other regions of the empire, with this workforce including persons who were not descended from nobility.

2) During the course of the process of incorporation into the Russian Empire of the Ukrainian governorates which up until the end of the 18th century were part of Rzeczpospolita, a large number of members of the former Polish szlachta did not receive the rights enjoyed by the Russian nobility, and at some point members of this group stopped (as a result of losing the right to do so) positioning themselves as nobles.

Having said that, over time a certain percentage of such “non-nobles” did manage to obtain, through their service, a title that was facilitative of acquiring the right to nobility. For instance, among the Nemirov Gymnasium’s functionaries not descended from nobility, the rank of collegiate assessor was granted to A. Andrievsky and V. Makievsky. Subsequently, through the teaching profession these individuals managed to acquire the right to hereditary nobility (TsGIAUK. F. 707. Op. 12. D. 35. L. 4, 10).

Upon being granted the rank of collegiate assessor, a functionary could apply for their name to be entered in the genealogical book of nobility. For instance, in September of 1830 senior teacher at the Taurida Gymnasium P. Strukov requested that the Board of Kharkov University forward a copy of the certificate granting him the title over to the Voronezh Gentry Deputy Assembly so that it entered his name in the local genealogical book (GAKhO. F. 667. Op. 288. D. 26. L. 1).

There were cases where individuals from unprivileged strata of society succeeded in acquiring even higher titles through service. An example of a successful career achieved this way is the official biography of F. Zastavsky. Born circa 1768, this man was appointed to the post of principal at the Taurida Gymnasium in 1830. He was descended from clergy. It is through service as an instructor, which he entered in 1788 as a senior teacher, that he acquired the right to hereditary nobility (he had received his education at the Kiev Ecclesiastical Academy and the Saint Petersburg Teacher’s Seminary). In 1824, F. Zastavsky was awarded an Order of St. Anna (Third Class), and in 1827 he was granted the rank of state councilor (Fifth Class). He would subsequently receive a number of other awards and benefits as well (GAKhO. F. 667. Op. 285. D. 20. L. 1-4).

Settled relatively recently at the time, the empire’s southern governorates were in need of a large number of functionaries to fill posts at the regions’ newly established public institutions. With the Russian government unable to staff all the open positions with members of the nobility, the social makeup of the regions’ workforce of public officers ended up being quite motley. This was true for educational functionaries as well. The authors conducted an analysis of records of service for 48 educational functionaries in Taurida Governorate for the year 1830. As evidenced by Table 1, by social background the bulk of this workforce was made up of members of the nobility and clergy (27.1 % and 25 %, respectively).

Table 1. Distribution of Functionaries at Gymnasia, District Schools, and Parish Schools in Taurida Governorate by Social Background at 1830

Nobles	Petty bourgeois	Merchants	Peasants	Persons of ecclesiastical status	Raznochintsy		
					Foreigners	Children of company officers	Other
13	6	1	2	12	4	6	4
27.1%	12.5%	2.1%	4.2%	25%	8.3%	12.5%	8.3%

The group of nobles includes Polish szlachta nobleman (as he was listed in the record of service) M. Tarnavsky. A large percentage was made up of so-called raznochinty (29.1 %), i.e. individuals who were not part of the nobility, petty bourgeoisie, merchants, peasants, clergy, or guild masters. This social group included foreigners, children of company officers, colonists, and clerks. Among the 48 functionaries, these numbered 14.

Worthy of special mention among the above functionaries are two descendants of the peasantry – all the more so as both initially were serfs. One of them, A. Topolsky, attended the Prilutskoe District School, from which he successfully graduated. Subsequently, in 1824 he continued school in Prince Bezborodko's Gymnasium of Higher Sciences, where he stayed up until 1827. In 1828, the Board of Kharkov University appointed him a lower division teacher at the Oleshky District School in Taurida Governorate. Just a year later, in 1829, A. Topolsky was freed of his unfree status and officially allowed by the Senate to enter public service (GAKhO. F. 667. Op. 285. D. 20. L. 17-19). The other peasant, A. Antonov, entered in 1821 the Kharkov Ecclesiastical Collegium, from which he graduated as a Philosophy major. Subsequently, he was a private (free) participant in a program of study in the Department of Medicine at Kharkov University. After passing his exams, he was appointed to the post of history teacher at the Novozybkov District School in Chernihiv Governorate. In 1830, he was transferred to the Oleshky District School (GAKhO. F. 667. Op. 285. D. 20. L. 34-35). The record of service contained no information on A. Antonov having been freed of his unfree status and accepted into public service. Yet, this *must* have actually taken place, as he was listed in the document as a functionary, which means he could no longer have been a serf at the time. In the column within the record of service dealing with whether he was fit to continue public service and be promoted in rank further, it was stated 'Fit and worthy to'.

In the first third of the 19th century, the workforce of school functionaries had an inhomogeneous social makeup across the empire. This, specifically, was the case with the Ukrainian lands within the Russian Empire. Here, it is worth focusing on the following three regions with distinct characteristics of their own:

1) Rightbank Ukraine – the Ukrainian lands incorporated into Russia as a result of the division of Rzeczpospolita in the late 18th century, which had many centuries' experience living under a European-style statehood. For a long period of time, everybody who served the state was granted szlachta status here. Over the years, this estate grew substantially, with virtually all public offices coming to be held by members of the szlachta. Even in the first third of the 19th century, members of other estates held public offices quite rarely.

2) Leftbank Ukraine – the lands in the former Hetmanate and a part of Sloboda Ukraine, which had a history of statehood of their own founded on both the European (a major portion of these lands belonged to Poland, with their laws based on various Polish and German regulations) and Russian experience (the region's close relationship with the Muscovite state in the mid-17th century and the gradual incorporation of the Hetmanate into Russia, with imperial legislation put in place across the region). The region's local elite was also relatively large. In addition, this estate was quite open – members of other social groups who were well-to-do, had a quality education, and desired to serve could well become members of the szlachta. As a consequence, the majority of functionaries at the region's public institutions in the period between the late-18th and first half of the 19th centuries had szlachta status, although members of other estates constituted a sizable number too.

3) The southern Ukrainian lands, which began to be colonized starting in the 18th century. This process was most active starting in the period between the late 18th and early 19th centuries. As a consequence, right from the outset all spheres of life in the region were fashioned after the Russian imperial template. There were not enough nobles to fill all positions in the region's public institutions, which contributed to the social composition of its workforce of functionaries being highly diverse compared with other Ukrainian lands.

The above characteristics had an effect on the social composition of the workforce of school functionaries as well.

Over time, the Tsarist government's assimilatory policy resulted in the Ukrainian lands' distinctive nature across all spheres of life being effaced almost entirely by as early as the mid-19th century. This is substantiated by a set of records of service for functionaries at gymnasia, district schools, and parish schools in Poltava and Volhynian Governorates composed in 1850.

During that period, the number of functionaries of this kind in Poltava Governorate was 172, and in Volhynian Governorate – 169 (TsGLAUK. F. 707. Op. 16. D. 682). Table 2 displays the findings from an analysis of this workforce by social background.

Table 2. Distribution of Functionaries at Gymnasia, District Schools, and Parish Schools in Poltava Governorate and Volhynian Governorate by Social Background at 1850

	Nobles		Petty bourgeois		Cossacks		Merchants		Peasants	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Poltava Governorate	59	34.3	15	8.7	17	9.9	1	0.6	9	5.2
Volhynian Governorate	68	40.2	20	11.8	2	1.2	3	1.8	3	1.8

	Persons of ecclesiastical status		Distinguished citizens		Raznochintsy					
					Foreigners		Children of company officers		Other	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Poltava Governorate	45	26.2	1	0.6	8	4.6	12	7	5	2.9
Volhynian Governorate	47	27.8	1	0.6	7	4.15	11	6.5	7	4.15

Thus, the social makeup of the workforce of school functionaries in both governorates had become more diverse. The two governorates had just about the same number of members of a particular social group. An exception was only the Cossacks. This estate was concentrated predominantly in the leftbank Ukrainian lands, while the presence of members of Cossackdom in other regions is explained by the fact that some were simply in service in those areas.

It should be noted that descendants of the peasantry (even more so former serfs) in public service was the exception rather than the rule. Members of other non-noble categories of the population, especially clergy, petty bourgeoisie, and children of company officers, being in public service was not a very rare case in the first half of the 19th century.

When it comes to parish schools, service in them was generally not seen as prestigious. Members of the nobility constituted the minority here, with many of those who did go for it eventually transferring to other places. For instance, in 1850 out of the 40 staff at parish schools in Poltava Governorate only two were members of the nobility, with the rest distributed by social background as follows: merchants – one, foreigners – two, peasants – two, children of company officers – three, petty bourgeoisie – six, Cossacks – nine, and clergy – 15 (TsGLAUK. F. 707. Op. 16. D. 682). In this case, all of the clergy held the post of teacher of God's Law. Pursuant to the laws of the Russian Empire, these individuals were considered public officers and were entitled to a salary, but they could not work their way up the Table of Ranks.

A separate group of educational functionaries was so-called family teachers (mentors). These individuals (exclusive of women), too, were considered public officers, with records of service composed for and titles granted to them. In the first half of the 19th century, there were a significant percentage of foreigners among those willing to be a family teacher. In 1832, the Volhynian Lyceum had two contenders for the title: French lady E. Delille (in September) and Venetian man L. d'Artusius (in October). Both had to swear allegiance to the Russian state (GAKhO. F. 667. Op. 287. D.194). In 1850, Volhynian Governorate had a total of five family mentors, with four of these being foreigners and one descended from nobility. These individuals had titles ranging from Class 14 to Class 9. At the same time, Poltava Governorate had just two functionaries of this kind.

One was descended from smallholders and had the rank of collegiate secretary, and the other one was descended from children of company officers and had no title.

5. Conclusion

In general, the workforce of educational functionaries in Ukrainian governorates within the Russian Empire was quite diverse in social background. Yet, in different regions within them it was characterized by a number of distinct features associated with a unique historical past (e.g., the former Polish Right Bank and Hetman Left Bank and southern areas colonized by the Russian government). By the mid-19th century, while retaining its social diversity, the workforce of educational functionaries in the Ukrainian lands had pretty much lost most of its regional characteristics.

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