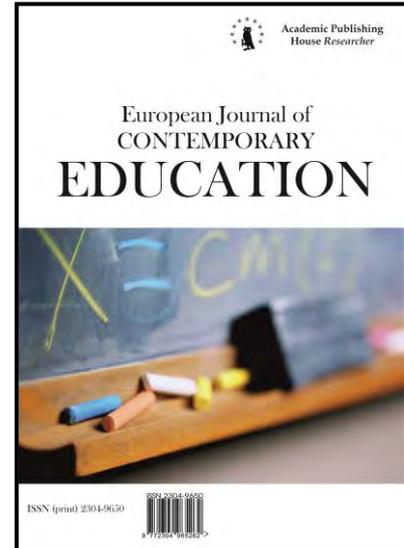




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## The History of Education

### The Institution of Honorary Supervisors in the System of Public Education of the Russian Empire in the First Half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (The Case of the Kharkov Educational District): Duties, Career, Social Status, and Education Level. Part 1

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#### Abstract

This paper offers an insight into some of the key practices associated with the operation of the institution of honorary supervisors in the system of public education of the Russian Empire in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Only a member of the noble estate could be an honorary supervisor. These functionaries were an important part of the empire's public education system. They oversaw the work of uyezd (district) schools and provided them with financial assistance. Honorary supervisors were not salaried but could be awarded a high title and receive a major state award for their efforts, which could significantly raise their social status.

Honorary supervisors had a wide purview over the operation of the schools they oversaw. They took part in resolving facilities issues and attended examinations and monthly teacher meetings. These functionaries could also petition senior management for the remuneration or punishment of particular school functionaries. Conversely, honorary supervisors with a negligent attitude toward their duties could legitimately face dismissal by the university administration.

**Keywords:** Russian Empire, Ministry of Public Education, honorary supervisor, uyezd school, Kharkov Educational District, functionary, nobility.

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## 1. Introduction

The institution of trusteeship in the secondary and higher education sectors has had quite a rich history, and its practices have been quite beneficial, throughout the world. Over time, this experience has transformed into phenomena such as boards of trustees and endowment funds, which are in place at many (normally quite successful) community colleges or universities around the world, providing them with financial and administrative support and influencing their strategy **for development at that. On one hand, these entities can help implement a school's autonomy. On** the other hand, in the event of insufficient financial support from the state or a worsening economic situation overall, they can provide a reserve that will help the facility keep running.

Not all countries have had the institution of trusteeship in place, and to this day the practice is either being ignored altogether or is being used very poorly in most developing and even many developed countries. That said, the practice has had quite a rich history. For instance, trusteeship of various educational institutions was quite a common practice in the Russian Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> **centuries. What is more, it existed as an element of the state's education policy.** However, subsequent to the fall of the empire and the coming of Soviet power these practices were discontinued entirely. The educational process and the education sphere as a whole were placed in complete dependence on the needs of the Communist regime.

From that time until recently, the traditions of trusteeship were almost entirely lost in this part of the world. Today, the education sectors in many of the former Soviet states are undertaking some kind of an effort to revive the elements of trusteeship. This includes various employer councils, parents' committees in secondary educational institutions, endowment funds, and other entities.

The implementation of positive practices for the development of higher and secondary educational institutions through reviving the institution of trusteeship, or at least some of its elements, can be a significant **component in the state's education policy. Exploring the way this** institution operated in the past and its efficiency in different periods will, without question, help take account of most of its strengths and weaknesses and use that information in implementing the **state's policy with as much benefit for the education system as possible.**

This work will examine the operation of the institution of trusteeship in the Russian Empire through the example of honorary supervisors of uyezd schools within the Kharkov Educational District in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## 2. Materials and methods

In putting this work together, the authors made use of the following three major groups of information materials:

- research devoted to various aspects of the history of the education system in the Russian Empire in the period under examination that covers issues related to the activity of honorary supervisors of uyezd schools as well;

- official published materials – general government and intradepartmental regulatory documents provided in **'Complete Laws of the Russian Empire'** (PSZ-1; PSZ-2) and the official mouthpiece of the Department of Education **'Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniya'** (ZhMNP, 1849; ZhMNP, 1852), as well as the reference book on functionaries in the Russian Empire **'Mesyatseslov'** (1815–1834) (Mesyaceslov, 1815-1834);

- handwritten archival materials, some of which are being introduced into scholarly nomenclature for the first time ever. These documents were discovered in the State Archive of Kharkov Oblast in the holding of Kharkov University (GAKhO. F.667).

**Kharkov University's holding contains a large number of materials that can shed light on** many of the aspects of the development of the public education system in various regions of the Russian Empire in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including the operation of the institution of honorary supervisors. This is explained by the fact that Kharkov University was at the heart of the **Kharkov Educational District, which had long been the empire's** largest educational district and at different times incorporated the following regions: the Astrakhan (1824–1833), Volhynian and Podolia (1831-1832), Ekaterinoslav (until 1833), Poltava (until 1839), Taurida, Kherson, and Chernigov (until 1832), Kiev (1818–1832), and Oryol (until 1824 and from 1833 to 1877) governorates, the Bessarabia, Georgian, and Imereti oblasts (1824–1831), Caucasus Oblast (1824–1846), the lands of the Don and Black Sea Cossacks (until 1846), and Odessa Gradonachalstvo (since 1830).

The paper's methodological basis is grounded in the principles of historicism and objectivism, which are aimed at providing a non-biased view of past events and phenomena through the prism of their development and dialectic interaction. Since the work is centered upon individuals brought together by a set of social-professional duties (honorary supervisors), the authors made use of the principle of anthropocentrism as well.

### 3. Discussion

There is a large body of research covering the system of public education in the Russian Empire as a whole, which includes the history of its particular elements, the statutory regulation of its operation, and the characteristics of the educational process within it. These thematic areas became popular back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and have continued to be of interest to this day. Honorary supervisors of schools have rarely been the subject of special research. That said, researchers *have* actually looked into certain aspects of their activity in the context of the operation of particular educational institutions in the Russian Empire. This, doubtless, is testimony that **honorary supervisors were a significant part of the nation's provincial public education system.**

In recent years, topics such as trusteeship in the education sector of the Russian Empire and honorary supervisors as a key part of that institution have become the subject of increasing interest to researchers. That said, most of the research in this thematic field has been conducted by Russian scholars (although there are some exceptions too). For instance, in the context of investigating provincial teaching in the Russian Empire in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century scholar L. Artamonova has devoted some attention to honorary supervisors as well ([Artamonova, 2012](#); [Artamonova, 2015](#)). Researcher V. Mylko has explored the duties of honorary supervisors as part of his research into the history of uyezd schools that operated in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Ukrainian governorates ([Mylko, 2015](#)). This aspect has been researched in some detail by E. Safina too ([Safina, 2016](#)).

The actual institution of trustees and honorary supervisors has been researched by Yu. Smirnov ([Smirnov, 2017](#)), S. Galiullina ([Galiullina, 2012a](#); [Galiullina, 2012b](#); [Galiullina, 2015](#)), Yu. Gracheva ([Gracheva, 2019](#)), and some others. One of the authors of the present paper, too, has touched in some of his research upon certain characteristics of the service of honorary supervisors in uyezd schools (specifically, those in the Chernigov and Poltava governorates) ([Degtyarev, 2015a](#)). The author has also explored the role of this group of educational officials in a series of papers covering various aspects of the history of education in particular regions of the Russian Empire ([Degtyarev, 2015b](#); [Degtyarev, Magsumov, 2016a](#); [Degtyarev, 2016b](#); [Degtyarev, 2018](#)).

The lack of research into the subject under study is also attested by the fact that the majority of scholars researching the institution of honorary supervisors have predominantly used archival documentary sources. The key reason behind this is a shortage of research publications that one could draw upon in researching the subject.

### 4. Results

The Charter for Educational Institutions ordained that all uyezd schools have a full-time supervisor on staff. Consequently, every school had a full-time supervisor of its own, and these functionaries were salaried. They had a broad scope of duties and responsibilities: selecting homes **and buildings to house the school, administering oversight over the school's funds, assets, and documentation, and even doing some teaching.**

The post of honorary supervisor was introduced in the Russian Empire on the initiative of the **Minister of Public Education at the same time the nation's uyezd schools emerged. It was instituted** on August 26, 1811 via an imperial edict ([PSZ-1. T.31. №24754: 830](#)). It was up to the Minister of Public Education to appoint one to the post of honorary supervisor.

The post of honorary supervisor could be held only by a member of the local nobility. The edict stipulated that these functionaries would not be salaried by the state. For this reason, the post would have to be held by a well-off squire with a steady income, as honorary supervisors were expected to take a financial part in the development of the educational institution in their charge. Starting in 1819, the law allowed for the post of honorary supervisor to be held by retired functionaries from among the nobility ([Pavlovskij, 1906: 123](#)). The Charter for Gymnasia and Uyezd and Parish Schools, issued in 1828, stipulated that honorary supervisors were to be **appointed from among** "well-respected nobles and functionaries residing in the uyezd or at least

the governorate” (PSZ-2. T.3. №2502: 1103). The 1848 School Charter repeated all of the provisions of the 1828 Charter concerning the duties and obligations of honorary supervisors (Ustav, 1848: 22-24).

Starting in 1834, the post of honorary supervisor ceased to be elective. Decisions regarding the filling of this post were now made by the university administration based on the findings from **inquiries of the marshal of the nobility on the candidate’s moral qualities. With that said, as before,** the decision would have to be ratified by the Minister of Public Education (Pavlovskij, 1906: 123).

The first criterion for appointing a person to the post was their stable financial status. To be appointed to the post of honorary supervisor, one would need to make a one-time monetary **contribution to the school’s budget, as well as agree to pay a certain amount of money into it** yearly. A candidate personally determined the amount they were prepared to put up, and, if that amount was fine with the minister, the person would be appointed to the post. Normally, the annual contribution was over 100 rubles. For example, when a willingness to be appointed to the honorary supervisor of the Pyriatyn Uyezd School (Poltava Governorate) was expressed by local squire A. **Markovich, who pledged to pay 100 rubles into the school’s budget yearly, the size of the** contribution was apparently found to be too small by the university administration. The nobleman was suggested increasing the size of his contribution, and, upon his consent to do so, he was appointed to the post. In another example, the honorary supervisor of the Zenkov Uyezd School in the same governorate, E. Brazol', made a one-time contribution of 500 rubles and pledged to pay **into the budget 300 rubles yearly. Lastly, supervisor I. Kapnist’s one-time** contribution to the Khorol Uyezd School was 200 rubles, and his yearly payment was 300 rubles (Pavlovskij, 1906: 123). Failure to make payment on time could result in the dismissal of the supervisor.

**Honorary supervisors not only donated their own funds towards the school’s upkeep but also** sought to attract funding from other sources – from the local nobility, petty bourgeoisie, merchants, etc. In other words, in the broadest sense it was their obligation to seek out funding for keeping the school in optimal condition (PSZ-2. T.3. №2502: 1110).

**The edict ‘On Placing Honorary Supervisors in Charge of Uyezd Schools above Full-Time Supervisors’ (1811) established honorary supervisors as the patrons of the schools, conferring upon** them the duty of administering oversight over the facilities and custody of their funding (PSZ-1. T.31. №24754: 830). As already mentioned, this kind of patronage was grounded in regular donations. In the course of time, these functionaries came to be called honorary trustees, which much better reflected the content of the duties vested in them.

Honorary supervisors were considered as being in state service through the Ministry of Public Education, which provided them with the opportunity to gain a title in the Table of Ranks, as well as be eligible for various rewards from the government (e.g., orders, certificates of commendation, and gifts). Back in 1812, the Trustee of the Kharkov Educational District, Count S. Potocki, proposed the use of awards to recognize the work of supervisors, and the idea was eventually put into effect at the highest government level (Bagalej, 1904: 1025). This was one of the **key reasons behind the post’s high popularity among the nobility. In 1828, the honorary supervisor** of the Krolevets Uyezd School (Chernigov Governorate), I. Bardakov, asked to be relieved of his duties as supervisor and for his 35-year spotless service record to be recognized with a decoration. At that time, he was already 62 and had been promoted to the rank of collegiate councilor (Class 6 in the Table of Ranks). However, in this particular case, due to lack of service as a company officer, **the supervisor’s request to be decorated was turned down (GAKhO. F.667. Op.287. D.173: 4).** On December 10, 1849, the honorary trustee of the Belaya Tserkov Gymnasium, staff-rittmeister M. Sudienko, was awarded an Order of St. Anna, Class 2 (decorated with an imperial crown). The honorary trustee of the Kiev gymnasia, collegiate assessor D. Zlotnitsky was awarded an Order of St. Anna, Class 3 (ZhMNP, 1849: 101-102). Cases where honorary trustees were decorated in this way were not singular. An edict issued in 1816 established a set of moral benefits for honorary supervisors (these benefits could be applied to other benefactors of the schools as well), which **included placing one’s name in the school book and hanging one’s portrait on the wall** inside the school (Sysoeva, 1998: 19).

A supervisor could not leave his service or enter a different one without the knowledge of the school administration, and had to inform it of his plans to take a vacation or travel outside the governorate. Pursuant to the 1828 Charter, honorary supervisors of uyezd schools could not combine their post with other elective posts, except for the posts of gubernia or uyezd marshals of

the nobility (PSZ-2. T.3. №2502: 1109). Essentially, there normally was never a problem finding candidates for the position. The example of the honorary supervisors of the uyezd schools in the Chernigov and Poltava governorates, appointed in January of 1812, is testimony that it was quite customary back then for honorary supervisors to combine several elective positions – more specifically, that of supervisor and that of marshal of the nobility. As an example, out of the nine supervisors in Poltava Governorate, whom it was possible to obtain data on, three concurrently were an uyezd marshal of the nobility (Pavlovskij, 1906: XV, XXXI, XXXV). Based on the archival data, there were a total of 13 honorary supervisors in Chernigov Governorate as at the start of 1812. That said, the authors managed to locate only seven service records relating to these functionaries. Three of them held the post of uyezd marshal of the nobility (nearly 43 %) (GAKhO. F.667. Op. 283. D.116). While it cannot be claimed that this information is perfectly accurate (with data not available on all the honorary supervisors), it does attest that to the post of supervisor they normally appointed an ambitious person who was well known and influential in the uyezd.

Depending on the post held, civil functionaries in the Russian Empire wore a certain type of uniform. Honorary supervisors could wear the same uniform as the Director of Gubernia Schools.

It was mandatory to publish the news of a person being appointed to the post of honorary supervisor in the official mouthpiece of the Department of Education ‘Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniya’. This normally was a short notice, something like the following: “A new appointment is final in the Kharkov Educational District. The marshal of the Lebedyn nobility, titular councilor A. Losev, has been appointed the honorary supervisor of the Lebedyn Uyezd School, a post he will hold in addition to his current position” (ZhMNP, 1852: 41). The notice also provided the date the functionary officially took office.

Essentially, the administrations of the uyezd schools, including full-time supervisors, had dual subordination. They were subordinate to the honorary supervisor and the Director of Gubernia Schools (who normally was the Director of the Gubernia Gymnasium as well). For general issues relating to the operation of the uyezd schools, the honorary supervisor worked with the Director of Gubernia Schools as two equal echelons of authority.

The duties and responsibilities of honorary supervisors were described in detail in Clauses 122 through 129 of the afore-mentioned Charter for Gymnasia and Uyezd and Parish Schools (1828). Pursuant to this document, these functionaries were to attend monthly teacher meetings (if they were not away for a legitimate reason at the time). While honorary supervisors did not chair those meetings, they were seen as the most significant participants in them. It was recommended that they visit and inspect all of the uyezd’s educational institutions as often as possible, and it was mandatory for them to do so at least once a year. With that said, it was to be made sure that one and the same school would not be inspected by the honorary supervisor at the same time it would be by the full-time supervisor.

Should the honorary supervisor spot any flaws in the operation of a parish school during an inspection, they would have to inform the school’s full-time supervisor of that, who would then have to take measures to resolve the issue. Similarly, should any shortcomings and abuses be spotted in an uyezd school, the honorary supervisor would point that out to the school’s full-time supervisor. Should the latter fail to react to the former’s observations dutifully, the Director of Gubernia Schools would then too be informed of the problem (PSZ-2. T.3. №2502: 1110).

Honorary supervisors could also petition senior management (e.g., the Trustee of the Educational District or the University School Committee) for the remuneration or punishment of particular school functionaries. At the end of each school year, honorary supervisors teamed up with full-time supervisors to take part in administering exams in all grades. Successful students were allowed to move to the next grade, whilst failures would have to repeat the grade failed (PSZ-2. T.3. №2502: 1105-1106, 1109-1110).

Honorary supervisors took part in resolving the school’s facilities issues as well. For instance, whenever a need arose for costly school building repairs or renovation works, all decision making on the matter was done by members of the local authorities and the honorary supervisor.

An honorary supervisor with a negligent attitude toward their duties could face dismissal by the administration. Here is an example. In 1828, Kharkov University dispatched professor-in-ordinary V. Komlishinsky to check the condition of certain schools in Sloboda Ukraine Governorate. One of the schools, the Starobelsk Uyezd School, was found to be in poor condition. One of the main causes behind that was that “its honorary supervisor, I. Cherenkov, had made very

little effort to ensure the school was in proper condition”. The facility’s material shape was so poor that the university administration had to ask the Treasury Chamber for 500 rubles a year worth of **funding for the school’s needs. Mr. Cherenkov was dismissed from his post as Honorary Supervisor** (Bagalej, 1904: 1034).

Honorary supervisors enjoyed a very high social status. Their high standing is also attested by the amount of support provided to them by the local nobility. As an example, when they appointed nobleman I. Brzhesky the honorary supervisor of the Aleksandriya Uyezd School (Kherson Governorate), the local nobility donated to the school 1,745 rubles, provided for its use a noble home worth 3,000 rubles, provided an additional 500 rubles for its upkeep, and pledged to provide an extra 600 rubles going forward. In addition, on the day of the grand opening of the above educational institution the nobility donated an additional 400 rubles. Mr. Brzhesky personally **pledged 1,000 rubles of his own money to help organize the school’s work, purchased 200 rubles worth of books and textbooks for poor students, and pledged to provide an extra 100 rubles a year for the school’s needs. Unfortunately, as indicated by the findings from a series of inspections of the Aleksandriya Uyezd School conducted afterwards, in the course of time the local nobility discontinued its financial support to the facility, which would have a negative effect on its overall condition** (Bagalej, 1904: 1030, 1033).

## 5. Conclusion

In the Russian Empire, the post of honorary supervisor used to be sought after by many members of the nobility, as it served as an easy way to receive a title that would earn them high social status. In essence, it is by way of their donations to a school that many acquired titles and status for themselves. Honorary supervisors whose donations were large enough could even be put forward for an award by senior management.

However, many of those who held the post of honorary supervisor were genuinely keen on helping develop the system of education in their uyezd or governorate. Many were well-educated individuals. Cases where members of the nobility did not see getting a title or an award as the primary reason to be an honorary supervisor and for many years performed their job duties in an altruistic manner were not singular.

The second part of this study will investigate the dynamics of change in the number of honorary supervisors of schools within the Kharkov Educational District in the first third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This research should help draw as objective conclusions as possible **as to the position’s popularity among nobles and functionaries back then. The authors will also examine through specific examples the effect serving as an honorary supervisor could have on one’s career and social status at the time.**

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