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The Organization of the Educational Process in Kharkov Imperial University (1835–1863)

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Abstract

This paper analyzes ‘The Review of Instruction in Subjects at Kharkov Imperial University’, an official document that regulated the organization of the educational process in Kharkov Imperial University.

The work provides an insight into the evolution of modifications to the titles of this historical source for the entire period it was published. It examines the document’s substantive and formal characteristics such as structure, format, and data presentation.

A quantitative analysis of data from the document helped establish a list of disciplines and courses taught at the university and measure the weekly academic load of students in Kharkov Imperial University (in hours), which made it possible to also measure this load across terms and for instructors as well.

The study helped establish certain distinctive characteristics of the document – more specifically, the fact that it contained recommendations regarding scholarly and scholarly-instructional study guides that instructors were to use in their work. Such recommendations were eventually replaced with a list of recommended literature for each course taught at the university.

The present paper also provides dynamic data on the quantitative composition of the teaching workforce in each specific department. The authors established the scholarly-pedagogical potential of Kharkov Imperial University in the period between Nicholas’s University Statute of 1835 and Alexander’s University Statute of 1863.

It was established that, in addition to their primary duties at the university, professors also gave public lectures, which had them adapting their courses to the needs and interests of the public. As a rule, giving public lectures was not a burden on instructors, as it was voluntary in nature.

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Among other matters, the authors researched the nonacademic component of university education – more specifically, the teaching of the “pleasing arts”. Based on this, a conclusion was drawn that the model of higher education in the Russian Empire in the 19th century was focused on the all-round development of a person.

Keywords: educational process, Russian Empire, higher education, Kharkov Imperial University

1. Introduction

What is essential to gaining a proper insight into the development of the system of higher education in the Russian Empire in the 19th century is the availability and accessibility of a source studies base that can enable comprehensive analysis and integrated assessment of particular historical events. From this standpoint, it may be worth drawing the attention of the scholarly community to ‘The Review of Instruction in Subjects’, a document that over the course of its existence was released under different titles. The present paper examines the characteristics of this valuable source on the history of higher education in the Russian Empire through the example of Kharkov Imperial University.

The document, which was published under the authority of a university’s Board, contained valuable information about the characteristics of the educational process in the country’s institutions of higher learning, including data on the academic disciplines taught and the teaching workforce employed across the university in different departments (e.g., academic degree and/or civil title, position held, state awards and other achievements, and courses taught). In addition, the document makes it possible to analyze the characteristics of the academic load of both students and instructors in the university.

Of particular importance is the fact that the document, which is an official source, contains objective information about various salient issues in the university’s history.

The authors undertook to analyze ‘The Review of Instruction in Subjects at Kharkov Imperial University’ to gain an insight into the organization of the educational process in Kharkov Imperial University in the period from the adoption of the University Statute of 1835 to the adoption of the University Statute of 1863. The document reflects the substantial changes in the social-political, social-cultural, and other spheres of life in the Russian Empire at the time.

2. Materials and methods

The authors analyzed ‘The Review of Instruction in Subjects at Kharkov Imperial University’, a historical source on the system of higher education in the Russian Empire in the 19th century that contains official factual material on the organization of the educational process in that institution of higher learning ([Obozrenie, 1835-1863](#)).

The document was an official bulletin of Kharkov Imperial University (similar documents were published by universities across the Russian Empire). Published yearly under the authority of the university’s Board, it served to address the various characteristics of its educational process (e.g., staffing, academic load, curricula, and instructional support).

The authors’ use of methods of data analysis helped establish the key areas and objectives in the process of implementation of the curriculum in Kharkov Imperial University subsequent to the adoption of the University Statute of 1835.

The authors employed comparative analysis to compare the university’s departments in terms of their scholarly-pedagogical potential (e.g., total scholarly-pedagogical personnel; total instructors in each department holding a doctoral or master's degree; academic load of students and instructors across the university in different departments, with breakdown into years, terms, and weeks; total courses taught across the university in different departments).

The analysis helped gain an integrated insight into the organization of the educational process in Kharkov Imperial University prior to the adoption of the University Statute of 1863.

3. Discussion

The history of Kharkov Imperial University is interwoven into the overall fabric of the history of higher education in the Russian Empire, which is no wonder, as it is known as not only one of the Empire’s oldest universities but a major research and educational center in Leftbank Ukraine.

In this regard, the history of Kharkov Imperial University must be viewed in the context of the development of higher education and science across the entire Russian Empire. This idea found its reflection in the fundamental research project ‘Ubi Universitas – Ibi Europa. The Transfer and Adaptation of the University Idea in the Russian Empire in the Period between the Second Half of the 18th Century and the First Half of the 19th Century’, focused on issues of the development of the university idea in the Russian Empire, the development of the university space, the social history of universities, etc.

Research of this kind can help determine key trends in the development of the system of higher education in the Russian Empire and the formation of the values of the university community as a corporation of students and instructors. In this context, the history of Kharkov Imperial University is of significant research interest, and it has been explored in a number of research works.

In this context, it is worth mentioning a systematic bibliographic index published in 2007 containing a bibliography on the history of Kharkov University for the period starting in 1804, i.e. the year the university was established (Istoriia, 2007). What makes the collection valuable is that it lists over 8,000 scholarly works on the university’s history, which are divided both chronologically and thematically. In the context of the present study, of particular interest are Sections 10 (‘Educational Activity’) and 13 (‘Staff’) of Issue 1, as well as Issue 2, which contains a bibliography on various issues relating to the operation of the university’s departments during the time of the Russian Empire.

In addition to general works on the history of Kharkov Imperial University (e.g., Andreev, 2009; Avrus, 2001; Bagalej, 1904; Denisenko, 2001; Kaluhin, 2019; Vishlenkova, 2013), it is also worth mentioning research works in which the topic was addressed to some degree (e.g., Astakhov, 1955; Kucher, 1980; Redin, 1908; Slyusarskij, 1955). As regards the actual analysis of the instruction review document, of particular interest is the research by E.Yu. Zharova (Zharova, 2013), which explores it as a historical source on higher education in the Russian Empire.

4. Results

The earliest example of this type of document dates back to the late 18th century, when it was adopted at the level of Moscow University, the oldest university in the Russian Empire. The practice was later implemented in the Kazan and Kharkov universities. The document for Kharkov Imperial University was released under different titles and appeared in the following editions:

1805 – The Notice about Public Instruction at Kharkov Imperial University;

1808 – The Review of Public Readings at Kharkov Imperial University;

1809–1826 – The Review of Public Readings Held at Kharkov Imperial University;

1831–1833 – The Announcement about Public Instruction in Sciences at Kharkov Imperial University Based on a Determination by the Board;

1833–1837 – The Review of Public Instruction in Sciences at Kharkov Imperial University Based on a Determination by the Board.

1838 – The Review of Instruction in Sciences at Kharkov Imperial University;

1839–1884 – The Review of Instruction in Subjects at Kharkov Imperial University;

1885–1903 – The Review of Instruction in Subjects and the Distribution of Lectures and Practicals at Kharkov Imperial University.

Subsequent to the adoption of the University Statute of 1835, the document was published in Russian, as opposed to Russian and Latin previously. Up until the adoption of the University Statute of 1884, it commonly had been published for the entire university. Subsequently, it covered each department individually.

A noteworthy characteristic of the document is the fact that it contained references to resources recommended for use in instruction. For instance, in teaching the Logic course to first-year students, ordinary professor in the Philosophy Department M.N. Protopopov was to rely on K.F. Bachmann’s ‘System der Logik’, while Dean for the First Division of the Philosophy Department A.O. Valitsky “would provide instruction in the history of Greek literature based on his own notes and with reliance upon a work by Groddeck” (G.E. Groddeck’s ‘Über die Vergleichung der alten besonders griechischen mit der deutschen und neueren schönen Literatur’) (Obozrenie, 1843).

As regards the document's format, information in it was structured for each department. In accordance with the University Statute of 1835, Kharkov Imperial University had three departments. The Philosophy Department was composed of two divisions – the History and Philology Division, which taught philosophy, history, and languages, and the Physics and Mathematics Division.

In 1850, the two divisions were turned into two separate departments – the History and Philology Department and the Physics and Mathematics Department.

In addition, the facility had two more departments – the Law Department and the Medicine Department. Thus, from 1835 to 1850 Kharkov Imperial University had three departments, while starting in 1850 it had four departments.

Along with changes in the distribution of divisions across the different departments of the university, the University Statute of 1835 also introduced changes in terms of staffing ([Brokgaуз, Efron, 1902: 754-755](#)).

Going back to the issue of the document's format, it is worth examining its structure. The document was comprised of four nominal parts. The introductory part contained information about the university's management team, which was composed of both civil and ecclesiastical persons, listing their academic degree, civil title, and awards and achievements. In addition, this part listed the name of an Orthodox priest (protopriest).

For instance, in the 1847–1848 school year Kharkov Imperial University's senior management team included the following staff:

1. Rector – Ordinary Professor P.P. Artemovskiy-Gulak, Actual State Councilor and Master of Fine Sciences, decorated with an Order of St. Anna (2nd class), an Order of St. Vladimir (4th class), an Order of St. Stanislaus (2nd class), and a 25 years' flawless service medal.

2. Prorector – Ordinary Professor A.V. Kunitsyn, State Councilor and Doctor of Laws.

3. Professor of Divinity and Ecclesiastical History – Protopriest I.A. Zimin, Master of Divinity ([Obozrenie, 1847](#)).

The first part listed professors, instructors, and officers concerned with the university's educational process. Information about the teaching workforce was systematized for each department. Listed first were ordinary professors in divisions within different departments in the university, with each professor's academic degree and/or civil title, and awards and other achievements listed next to their name. Ordinary professors were followed by extraordinary professors, and then adjunct professors (the Medicine Department also included prosectors and lab demonstrators), with the same information presentation scheme followed.

For instance, the Physics Division had on staff an ordinary professor named V.I. Lapshin, who was a Doctor of Mathematical Sciences, a State Councilor, and a holder of an Order of St. Anna (2nd class) and a 20 years' flawless service medal ([Obozrenie, 1857](#)). In fact, many of the professors mentioned in the document were holders of major state awards and medals.

The document's first part concludes with information about lecturers teaching English, French, Italian, and German, as well as art instructors (drawing, music, dancing, equestrianism, fencing, gymnastics, and chant) ([Table 3](#)). It was stated in a note to the list that “learners can attend lectures in the arts, as well as English and Italian, by choice”.

The second part of the document contained information about the courses taught at the university ([Table 1](#)). Information was presented in two major formats. The least common was the following format: the instructor's full name, their position, the year they would teach in, all subjects they would teach, and the amount of hours they would put in weekly. This information was provided for an entire department, without reference to divisions.

From a standpoint of differentiation by divisions and department disciplines, the second format was more informative (starting in 1853), with the same kind of information provided but with each division within the university's departments now covered ([Obozrenie, 1853](#)).

The third part contained a table illustrating the distribution of subjects and instruction time. The table listed subjects taught in each year in each department and the number of hours per week assigned to them in the first and second half-year terms ([Table 2](#)).

Table 1. Subjects Taught at Kharkov Imperial University

	Philosophy Department		Medicine Department	Law Department
	Division 1	Division 2		
Year 1	1. Ancient Geography 2. Statistics	Algebra and Geometry	1. Latin Grammar 2. Algebra and Geometry 3. Botany 4. General Physics 5. Chemistry 6. Anatomy	1. Latin Grammar 2. Encyclopedia of Jurisprudence 3. Civil Service Regulations
Year 2	1. Ancient History 2. History of the Russian State 3. Statistics	1. Algebra and Geometry 2. General Physics 3. Chemistry	1. Botany 2. Physiology 3. Mineralogy 4. Internal Medicine 5. Anatomy 6. Pharmaceutical Science	1. History of the Middle Ages 2. Political economy 3. History of Roman Law 4. Civil Service Regulations
Year 3	1. Moral Philosophy 2. History of Modern Russian Literature 3. Ancient History 4. Political economy 5. Statistics	1. Astronomy 2. Theory of Celestial Motion 3. Technology 4. Mechanics 5. Architecture (Technical Drawing) 6. Physics of the Earth 7. Chemistry	1. Pathology 2. Internal Medicine 3. Pharmacology 4. Semiotics (Symptomatology) 5. Pathological Anatomy 6. Surgery	1. Moral Philosophy 2. History of the Middle Ages 3. Civil Law 4. International Law 5. Criminal Law 6. Civil Service Regulations
Year 4	1. History of Philosophy 2. Greek Antiquities 3. History of Roman Literature 4. History of Modern Russian Literature 5. Ancient History	1. Geodesy 2. Technology 3. Architecture 4. Organic Chemistry	1. Greek Antiquities 2. History of Roman Literature 3. Obstetrics 4. Women's Diseases 5. Children's Diseases 6. Pathology 7. Internal Medicine 8. Surgery 9. Veterinary Medicine 10. Medical Jurisprudence 11. Surgery	1. Canon Law 2. Greek Antiquities 3. History of Roman Literature 4. Municipal Improvement Laws 5. Civil Service Regulations 6. State Duty Laws
Year 5	-	-	1. Obstetrics 2. Ophthalmology 3. Semiotics (Symptomatology) 4. Veterinary Medicine 5. History of Medicine	-

In addition, it was compulsory for students in all the departments to take a number of general subjects normally taught in the initial years of university, which included the following:

1. Divinity
2. Ecclesiastical History
3. Russian Language Arts
4. Logic
5. Main Laws of the Russian Empire
6. State and Gubernia Institutions
7. Theory of Prose Compositions
8. Psychology
9. Ethics
10. History of the Russian State

11. Latin, French, etc.

An analysis of the data provided in the document, including those displayed in Table 1, indicates some unevenness in terms of the number of disciplines taught in different departments in the university (the Philosophy and Medicine departments had the largest number thereof) inclusive of core courses.

There also was unevenness in terms of the academic load through the lens of years of study in the university. It increased in senior years and in all the departments. The only exception was the Medicine Department, where the load was quite high throughout the program of study, which, above all, was due to the high share of medical practice in the educational process. The academic load varied between different departments weekly as well (Table 2).

Table 2. Study Load for Students in Kharkov Imperial University (hours per week)

	1842–1843			1853–1854				1862–1863			
	Phil. Dept.*	Law Dept.	Med. Dept.	Hist. and Phil. Dept.	Phys. and Math. Dept.	Law Dept.	Med. Dept.	Hist. and Phil. Dept.	Phys. and Math. Dept.	Law Dept.	Med. Dept.
Year 1	27/18	22	34	41	17	16	25	30	24	14	20
Year 2	20/15	19	28	32	17	17	19	33	14	14	24
Year 3	29/16	20	27	43	14	21	19	30	20	27	13
Year 4	16/9	15	44	37	18	16	32	24	19	15	35
Year 5	-	-	40	-	-	-	16	-	-	-	21

As can be seen, the largest academic load, in absolute terms, was carried by students attending the Philosophy Department, and later on those enrolled in the History and Philology Department, as well as the Medicine Department. For instance, in the 1842–1843 school year, a first-year student attending the Philosophy Department was taught 12 courses, a first-year student attending the Law Department – eight courses, and a first-year student attending the Medicine Department – 11 courses (Obozrenie, 1843). Over 50% of the disciplines were core courses (e.g., Divinity, Logic, Ecclesiastical History, etc.). The respective figures for the 1862–1863 school year were 12, nine, five, and 10 courses (Obozrenie, 1862).

A noteworthy aspect of the university's instruction to medical students is that it was mandatory for them to attend not only lecture (classroom) lessons but take part in practicals as well (e.g., “obstetrical exercises on the phantom”, hands-on training in a surgical clinic “under proper guidance”, «practical exercises on corpses”, etc.). The academic load increased for medical students particularly in fourth year, with more of their time having to be devoted to practical training.

The university's instructors held classes outside of it as well – they gave public lectures. For instance, the curriculum had ordinary professor E.S. Gordenkov teaching General Chemistry twice a week, and extraordinary professor I.D. Sokolov – teaching Mechanics, with both courses taught “as auxiliary to the arts and crafts” for the benefit of those pursuing a trade job.

As regards instruction in the “pleasing arts”, along with the academic courses, the university's student body was taught drawing (six hours per week), music (four hours per week), dancing (four hours per week), fencing (four hours per week), and equestrianism (six hours per week). As mentioned above, taking these “arts” was optional, with fencing and equestrianism being also available to students educated at the expense of the state.

* The provision of data on the Philosophy Department is based here on it being split into the History and Philology and Physics and Mathematics divisions.

Table 3. Kharkov Imperial University's Scholarly-Pedagogical Potential

	1850–1851								1857–1858								1862–1863							
	Hist. and Phil. Dept		Phys. and Math. Dept		Law Dept		Med. Dept		Hist. and Phil. Dept		Phys. and Math. Dept		Law Dept		Med. Dept		Hist. and Phil. Dept		Phys. and Math. Dept		Law Dept		Med. Dept	
	d	m	d	m	d	m	d	m	d	m	d	m	d	m	d	m	d	m	d	m	d	m	d	m
Ordinary professor	4	-	4	1	1	2	7	1	6	-	3	2	3	1	8	-	3	-	4	2	4	-	6	-
Extraordinary professor	-	-	2	2	-	1	-	-	2	-	1	2	3	-	1	-	-	3	1	4	-	-	2	1
Adjunct professor	3		4		1		7		2		3		-		4		1		2		1		7	
Extra staff	4 lecturers 4 art teachers								4 lecturers 5 art teachers								3 lecturers 5 art teachers							
Department's total	7		13		5		15		10		11		7		13		7		13		5		16	
University's total	48								50								47							

An analysis of the document indicates that between 1835 and 1863 the size of the teaching workforce in Kharkov Imperial University remained more or less steady, ranging between 44 and 52 people. The facility's largest teaching workforce was recorded in the 1847–1848 school year – 54 people ([Obozrenie, 1847](#)).

The largest number of scholarly-pedagogical staff were in the Philosophy Department and the Medicine Department. Subsequent to the splitting of the Philosophy Department (with its two divisions) into two separate departments, the History and Philology Department gradually, starting in 1858, ceased to lead the way in the number of staff, falling behind the Physics and Mathematics Department and the Medicine Department. By tradition, the Law Department had the smallest teaching workforce – an average of six instructors ([Obozrenie, 1835-1863](#)).

A calculation of the number of doctors among both ordinary and extraordinary professors employed in its departments subsequent to the splitting of the Philosophy Department (1850) indicates the following: the History and Philology Department employed an average of five doctors and one master; the Physics and Mathematics Department – five doctors and four masters; the Law Department – four doctors and one master; the Medicine Department – eight doctors and just three masters.

Thus, in absolute terms, the facility's teaching workforce was distributed relatively evenly across departments, with the exception of the Medicine Department, which had more positions than other departments, which is no wonder, as it had a larger academic load, due to a large number of practicals being conducted in clinics and labs.

The same can be said for the History and Philology Department, which led the way in the number of hours assigned to classes weekly. In this case, an instructor's load was determined by the large number of courses taught by them at a time, which included courses required for all students in all the departments (e.g., Logic, Divinity, Ecclesiastical History, etc.).

5. Conclusion

A valuable historical source on the system of higher education in the first half of the 19th century, 'The Review of Instruction in Subjects at Kharkov Imperial University' helps trace, through the example of Kharkov Imperial University, the dynamics of changes in academic (weekly and term) load in each department for both students and instructors. Of particular importance are

the document's data dealing with the teaching workforce (e.g., size, employment characteristics, and courses taught).

Of no less interest is the authors' comparison of the characteristics of the educational process across the university's departments. The data provided in the tables offer a dynamic insight into the key objective laws that governed the development of the educational component in each specific department.

An analysis of the source revealed minor fluctuations in the number of teaching staff over the nearly-30-year period (10–15% starting in 1835). Another fact worthy of mention is that in the period under review the largest number of doctors of science worked in two of the institution's four departments – the Philosophy Department (subsequently the History and Philology Department) and the Medicine Department.

The institution had a large number of instructors without an academic degree who held the position of ordinary or extraordinary professor, while simultaneously holding the civil title of state councilor, collegiate councilor, or collegiate assessor. The university had frequent cases of instructors having both an academic degree and a civil title.

As regards the university's study load across the departments, it was largest in the following two departments – the Philosophy (History and Philology) Department and the Medicine Department. The figure dropped gradually. Specifically, in the early 1840s it was higher than in the early 1860s. The biggest "load" was on senior students, who had the largest weekly academic load – and that is considering that members of this group were no longer taught general subjects, which were numerous and accounted for the lion's share of the academic load of the facility's junior students, especially first-year ones.

Another aspect worthy of mention is the load of the university's instructors, whose "burden" was comprised of not just giving academic lectures but holding public lecture classes as well. In this respect, the busiest were instructors in the Philosophy (History and Philology) Department, with each teaching several courses. While this was practiced in other departments as well, it is in the History and Philology Department that the practice was commonest.

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