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The History of Education

Employees within the Public Education Sector in the Russian Empire in the first half of the 19th century: Their Place within the Bureaucratic Apparatus and Some Characteristics of Their Service

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Abstract

This paper is focused on employees within the system of public education in the Russian Empire in the first half of the 19th century. An attempt was made to determine the place of this category of functionaries within the state's bureaucratic system.

Reference was made to relevant statutory enactments from the period under review, published documents, and archival materials. To refer to said category of public officers, use in the work was made of the synonymous terms 'functionaries within the public education sector', 'educational functionaries', 'pedagogical functionaries', and 'school functionaries'.

Here is an outline of the main insights drawn from this study. The legal status of employees within the education sphere, which had begun to take shape as early as the late 18th century, was formalized in the early 19th century. Insight was gained into the nature of their service, including their official functions and duties, their service conditions, and the attitude of their own and that of the public to this type of service. The service of pedagogical functionaries had a distinctive nature. Officers in this category were the most educated group within the nation's bureaucracy. Their functions were not purely bureaucratic and often were directed at educating and nurturing future functionaries.

Keywords: education, education policy, bureaucracy, public officers, functionaries, teachers, educational district.

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1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, the issue of whether or not pedagogical employees could be considered public officers has been brought up in the post-Soviet space more than once. The debate continues to this day. The issue dates back to the late 18th century, when it was first raised by the government of the Russian Empire. At that time, employees within the education sector were granted public service rights, becoming part of a social occupational group such as public officers. Exploring this historical experience in detail can provide valuable insight as to how to go about the place of pedagogical employees (teaching staff and auxiliary personnel in schools) in the fabric of social relations and their role in the complex process of state building.

2. Materials and methods

The present paper explores the characteristics of pedagogical service in the Russian Empire in the first half of the 19th century, more specifically some of the key characteristics of the service of functionaries within the public education sector.

Use was made of relevant writings by 19th and 20th century researchers and contemporary authors. As the work's primary source base, use was made of a set of documents published in *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniya* and relevant archival materials from the State Archive of Kharkov Oblast ([GAKhO](#)).

The research reported in this work was conducted with a reliance on the principles of historicism, objectivity, and historical anthropologism. Via the use of the principle of historicism in exploring the evolution of the status of employees within the public education sector, account was taken of the era's concrete historical circumstances. The principle of objectivity helped explore the making of service within the public education sector in the period from the late 18th to the first half of the 19th centuries taking into account the key objective laws that governed the state development process in the Russian Empire at that time. The focus was on using real facts and staying committed to not manipulating them in any way. The use of the principle of historical anthropologism (anthropocentrism) helped foreground the humanistic essence of the study, which is centered around a specific group of people with clearly defined professional roles – employees within the public education sector in the Russian Empire.

3. Discussion

There has been a lack of dedicated research into the service of pedagogical functionaries in the Russian Empire. The few researchers who have explored the issue under examination most notably include Yu.A. Disson, V.V. Morozova, O.V. Serdyutskaya, V.E. Slotin, and N.V. Firsova ([Disson, 2008](#); [Morozova, 2007](#); [Serdyutskaya, 2008](#); [Slotin, 2010](#); [Firsova, 2007](#)). Most of this research is focused on issues of statutory support for pedagogical service and the social status of functionaries within the public education sector. Researcher O.V. Serdyutskaya has also explored issues such as the everyday routine of pedagogical functionaries, their relationships with the administration and with their fellow staff members, and the corporate psychology of instructors ([Serdyutskaya, 2008: 102](#)). The authors of the present work have previously explored the characteristics of the service of honorary supervisors within the public education system in the Russian Empire ([Degtyarev, Polyakova, 2020](#); [Degtyarev et al., 2020](#)). Issues related to the Russian Empire's 19th century professoriate have been researched by A.E. Lebid, N.A. Shevchenko, and a few other scholars ([Lebid et al., 2020](#); [Lebid, Shevchenko, 2021a](#); [Lebid, Shevchenko, 2021b](#)).

Some information useful for exploring the subject under examination is available from some works devoted to the education sector in the Russian Empire as a whole and some devoted to the history of particular educational institutions. Those from the pre-Soviet period most notably include works by A.S. Voronov, P.V. Znamensky, D.K. Vishnevsky, E.A. Kivlitskiy, and V.V. Serebryanikov ([Vishnevskiy, 1903](#); [Voronov, 1849](#); [Kivlitskiy, 1899](#); [Znamenskiy, 1881](#); [Serebrennikov, 1897](#)). Worthy of a separate mention is a substantial work by M.F. Vladimirskiy-Budanov devoted to the government's policy on public education in the Russian Empire in the 18th century. The scholar explored the issue in the context of building a system of vocational education ([Vladimirskiy-Budanov, 1874](#)). The research on the issue conducted over the past few decades most notably includes works by L.A. Bulgakova, O.I. Travkina, V.L. Masliychuk, L.Yu. Posokhova, and L.N. Korablina ([Bulgakova, 1978](#); [Bulgakova, 1980](#); [Korablina, 2002](#); [Masliichuk, 2009](#); [Posokhova, 2009](#); [Travkina, 2003](#); [Degtyarev et al., 2018](#)).

4. Results

In exploring the service of functionaries within the public education sector in the Russian Empire, it may be particularly worth focusing on aspects such as the place of this category of functionaries within the country's bureaucratic apparatus, their official functions and duties, their service conditions, and the attitude of their own and that of the public to this type of service.

While performing their professional duties, employees within the public education sector performed virtually no bureaucratic functions. With that said, all of them were in public service, so the same remuneration system was used in respect of them as of functionaries in other sectors. Even in the Governing Senate, employees within the public education sector were referred to as functionaries in educational service. The focus of the present paper is on employees within this particular sector.

In addition to the terms 'functionaries within the public education sector' and 'educational functionaries', use herein will also be made of 'pedagogical functionaries' and 'school functionaries'. The term 'pedagogical functionaries' is broader, as it encompasses all employees in all types of educational institution, as well as home instructors. At the same time, the term 'school functionaries' denotes public officers in mid- and lower-level educational institutions (gymnasiums; uyezd and parish schools). The primary focus in the present paper is on school functionaries.

Functionaries within the public education sector formed a distinct social occupational group in the Russian Empire, and it was quite diverse in social background and education level.

Russian researcher O.V. Serdyutskaya has validly suggested that in the period under review teaching service had come closer in length of service to the rest of the types of public service in the Russian Empire (Serdyutskaya, 2008: 102).

The development of the distinct occupational group of teachers in the Russian Empire was in large part facilitated by the reforms undertaken by Catherine II (Morozova, 2007: 58), some of which were based on Austrian legislation. Almost at once, there emerged a need to determine the legal status of teachers. However, the Austrian regulatory framework did not contain any specific provisions relating to this. Consequently, the School Statute of 1786 did not clearly define the official status of employees in educational institutions. With that said, they were recognized as being in public service.

The status of pedagogical employees was clearly defined at the legislative level in the early 19th century, with members of this group able to enjoy all benefits of public service. Service within the public education sector was wholly subordinate to the will of the state and its bureaucratic needs. All educational institutions and their employees were to nurture students to become citizens loyal to the monarchy and train future functionaries (Slotin, 2010: 64-65). Pedagogy historian P.F. Kapterev viewed educational functionaries in the Russian Empire as a distinct social group, which he referred to as "the teacher estate". The scholar saw the group as "a special variety of functionaries, who, too, are obligated to observe state discipline and espouse existing state principles in word and action" (Kapterev, 1915: 226). Pedagogical functionaries enjoyed remuneration in the form of salaries, ranks, and orders.

Thus, along with civil servants, the nation's workforce in public service included employees within the science and education sectors as well, with members of this group working in a fairly broad spectrum of positions – from members of the Academy of Sciences to lab technicians and from professors to home instructors (Kvasov, 2005: 16-17).

A serious problem was providing educational institutions with the required number of functionaries. By nature, pedagogical service was not very popular (at least not among members of the Russian nobility). Besides, working as a pedagogical employee required a higher education level. These and a few other reasons could be conducive to a high staff turnover rate in educational institutions (except for universities, working in which was more prestigious and materially rewarding). As a result, it often was the case that one person taught several totally different disciplines, which negatively impacted on the quality of education provided.

The number of functionaries working in educational institutions in the Russian Empire grew continually in the period between the 18th and mid-19th centuries. This was associated with the development of the education system, an increase in the number of educational institutions of all types, and the growing need of the state for a highly skilled workforce to be employed in public administration, with special knowledge and skills increasingly required to work in this area.

Requirements for functionaries had changed significantly compared to the 18th century, when all that was required of members of this group was moral rectitude and some clerky skill.

The first half of the 19th century witnessed the beginning in the Russian Empire of the process of the vocational component being set apart into a separate component in the nation's education system. The state needed employees with special training in particular areas. This process began earlier with pedagogical functionaries than with those in other public service sectors. The state undertook to establish special pedagogical educational institutions and departments for this group. The number of teachers working in gymnasiums was regulated. The School Statute of 1804 limited the number of teachers in gymnasiums to 8, and the School Statute of 1828 – to 16, dividing the group into senior and junior teachers. The status of senior teachers was held by those concerned with teaching history, mathematics, ancient languages, and Russian language arts. These were Class 9 positions. The status of junior teachers was held by those concerned with teaching Russian grammar, geography, and foreign languages. These were Class 10 positions. A separate category was teachers of drawing and penmanship. These were Class 12 positions. In 1849, the Trustee of the Moscow Educational District, D.P. Golokhvastov, raised the need for training instructors of legal disciplines. The Governor-General of the Baltic Provinces, A.A. Suvorov, stated in his 1849 and 1853 reports to the Emperor that there was a shortage of lawyers, gymnasium teachers, and home instructors (Ryabikova, 1974: 61).

In February 1850, the government directed that it be allowed for state-funded students in the Law Institute of Saint Vladimir University in Kiev to be appointed to teach jurisprudence in gymnasiums, with it being mandatory for them to serve in that post for no less than 6 years (ZHMNP, 1850: 5).

When admitting a new employee to service, a school's principal was to coordinate the candidacy with its administration. More specifically, the principals of gymnasiums were to receive the go-ahead from the University's School Committee. For instance, on April 23, 1813, the principal of Chernigov Gymnasium lodged a formal request with the School Committee of Kharkov University to permit him to hire to the position of Chief Clerk a collegiate registrar named N.P. Filonovich, who had previously worked in the Chernigov Gubernia Administration. Enclosed with the request were the job candidate's discharge certificate and service record (GAKhO. F. 667. Op. 283. D. 136: 1).

When firing educational functionaries, principals were to coordinate the issue with the administration as well. It was mandatory to state the reason. If it lay in one's inability to perform one's duties due to health reasons, a relevant certificate was to be provided confirming that. A typical doctor's note contained a brief health report proving the impossibility of one performing one's official duties at the time. For instance, a physician at Chernigov Military Hospital described the physical condition of a teacher of German at Chernigov Gymnasium named K.F. von Flegen as follows: "... has long been suffering from the following medical conditions: chest pain and nervous prostration; I administered some treatment, but a quick recovery is not likely; for these reasons, Mr. von Flegen is unable to perform his job duties properly at this time" (GAKhO. F.667. Op. 283. D. 153: 3).

Sometimes, the authorities had no control over the processes of admitting to service, dismissing, and transferring school functionaries. This was quite rare and mainly was the case in Rightbank Ukraine, which had become part of the Russian Empire following the partition of Rzeczpospolita. Some of the educational institutions in that area were maintained by monasteries. In 1827, the Trustee of the Kharkov Educational District, which the above region was part of, received a complaint that the schools "operated by the Basilians and other ecclesiastical estates" admitted teachers and transferred them to other educational institutions at the sole discretion of an abbot. Personnel changes of this kind were not something that the School Committee of Kharkov University was normally readily informed of. This complicated the staffing of such educational institutions with specialists with the education and skills required to hold teaching positions, something that needed to be confirmed by certificates from the gymnasiums and universities they had attended (GAKhO. F. 667. Op. 287. D. 98: 10).

Contemporary researcher V.E. Slotin relies on the School Statute of 1804 to single out the following four major groups of school functionaries:

- 1) gubernia public school principals (gymnasium principals);
- 2) staff superintendents (or supervisors);

3) senior and junior teachers;

4) teachers of drawing, uyezd school teachers, and parish teachers (the last group typically being Class 14 teachers; this required not being a person of ecclesiastical status) (Slotin, 2010: 61-62).

The scholar did not include in any of these groups honored trustees and auxiliary personnel in educational institutions.

Arguably, it is fair to suggest that there was a fifth group, which included clerks, accountants, medical personnel, and a few other types of functionary in an educational institution – with or without a rank (but entitled to have one). While being considered public officers within the public education sector, those in this group were subsumed by V.E. Slotin under auxiliary personnel.

The principal of the local gymnasium was the highest school officer in a governorate at the time. The same person was in charge of public schools in a given area. In fact, it had been decreed by the Statute of 1804 that such a functionary was to be in charge of not only the local gymnasium but of all educational institutions in a given governorate. When considering a candidate for said position, account would be taken of one's social background (no members of the taxed estates could be admitted), age (one needed to be no younger than 16), and education level (one needed to be a graduate of an educational institution). This type of functionary belonged to Class 7. Essentially, apart from having an official duty to select personnel for the schools under their charge, each principal had to be an all-rounder, i.e. have a confident command of teaching methodology and be able to fill in for any teacher in the gymnasium if necessary.

Schools directors were to inspect each educational institution under their charge once every year. Furthermore, staff superintendents were responsible for the overall supervision and administration of the affairs of uyezd and parish schools all year round. While such functionaries were to belong to Class 9, it was not uncommon for them to have a lower rank, a consequence of shortages of staff superintendents in uyezd educational institutions. As of 1826, they were even legislatively allowed to have a rank lower than Class 9. The position of Staff Superintendent was typically held by pedagogues from the same educational institutions.

The School Statute of 1828 introduced the position of Gymnasium Inspector. Inspectors monitored teaching and the moral component in educational institutions (Yeroshkin, 1957: 59). Such functionaries were well-versed in a variety of issues related to the operation of such institutions. Consequently, they often ran the office when the principals of schools or gymnasiums were away. For instance, in August 1854, the post of Principal of Rovno Gymnasium was filled by court councilor A.D. Tumanov, formerly its inspector, in place of state councilor I.V. Roskovshenko, who left due to health issues (ZHMNP, 1854: 6-7).

A distinct category of school functionaries was teachers of religion. Members of this group belonged to the clergy and could not be awarded a rank in the Table of Ranks. Nevertheless, they were recognized by the government as being in public service. Some researchers are of the view that they were higher in status than ordinary civil school functionaries – based on the fact that their signature on a school-leaving certificate would come before that of other teachers (Slotin, 2010: 157). This appears to be debatable. Arguably, they simply commanded respect based on moral grounds, for Orthodox Christianity played a pivotal role in the life of Russian society at the time.

Apart from school functionaries, there were also home instructors. Male home instructors were considered public officer. They had an official service record maintained for them and could be awarded a rank. In the first half of the 19th century, many foreigners in Russia wished to work as a home instructor. For instance, in 1832, among the candidates for this title in Volyn Lyceum were a Frenchwoman named E. Delille (in September) and a Venetian named L. d'Artusi (in October). All such individuals pledged allegiance to the Russian state (GAKhO. F. 667. Op. 287. D. 194). In 1850, Volyn Governorate had 5 home instructors, with 4 of these being foreigners and just 1 being a local nobleman. All had a rank – between Class 14 and Class 9. At the same time, Poltava Governorate had just 2 such functionaries, with both being local residents. One of them, who came from the *odnodvortsy* social group, had the rank of collegiate secretary, and the other, who came from the children of company officers social group, did not have a rank.

To obtain a private home instructor's permit, one needed to pass exams in many different subjects. As many as 4 individuals sat for exams (2 males and 2 females) in Volyn Lyceum in September 1832. A former student of this lyceum named P. Leonchitsky sat for exams in arithmetic, algebra, geometry, Russian, Polish, French, Latin, and German. A former teacher of Liubar Uyezd School named M. Parsheim had to sit for exams in French and German (although his

professional competence was not to be doubted, as he had taught these very two languages at the above school earlier). Female graduates of Kremenets Boarding School named A. Navrotskaya and E. Delille sat for exams in divinity, Polish, French, German, arithmetic, and geography. Besides, A. Navrotskaya also demonstrated her knowledge and skills in penmanship, music, and dance (GAKhO. F. 667. Op. 287. D. 194: 1). Aside from taking exams, all four candidates for the title of home instructor also had to provide certified documents proving their noble descent. In addition, the School Committee of Kharkov University requested that P. Leonchitsky and M. Parsheim provide proof of “not being affiliated with the rebels” (GAKhO. F. 667. Op. 287. D. 194: 12). This was required in the light of the then-recent events of the November Uprising (1830-1831), with the authorities needing assurances about the political integrity and loyalty of such job candidates.

The ability of pedagogical functionaries to move up through the ranks was governed by the following criteria: education level (e.g., having an academic degree); pedagogical proficiency; length of service in education; previous track record (experience working in other institutions); having the backing of prominent scholars and other functionaries (Shpak, 2008: 129).

The period between the late 18th and the first quarter of the 19th centuries witnessed considerable interest in pedagogical service among persons of the clergy, Cossacks, and petit bourgeois across the Russian Empire. Many members of the underprivileged estates saw working in education as, above all, a way to raise their social status. It was easier for properly educated members of these estates to engage in pedagogical service than in any other type of public service. Besides, considering that there were fewer barriers to acquiring a class rank at that time, one could build a career this way relatively quickly back then.

In this context, worthy of particular note is the career of M.V. Anishchenkov, who held the rank of titular councilor (Class 9) and taught at Nogai Parish School within Taurida Governorate in 1830. He began service in 1809, when he was 18 and possessed a secondary education (which he upgraded a little later). He was of Cossack background. M.V. Anishchenkov had some experience serving in the Poltava Little-Russian Gubernia Administration, where he worked first as a clerk and then as a gubernia registrar. He later worked as a teacher at Romny Uyezd School within Poltava Governorate. While there, within a period of just 10 years, M.V. Anishchenkov advanced in rank from Class 14 to Class 9 in the Table of Ranks (from collegiate registrar to gubernia secretary, to collegiate registrar, and to titular councilor). Promotion through the ranks helped him attain nobility, raising his social status (GAKhO. F. 667. Op. 285. D. 20: 43-46). M.V. Anishchenkov's was not the only success story at the time.

5. Conclusion

Service within the public education sector was an integral component of the bureaucratic apparatus in the Russian Empire. All official relationships within this sector were regulated by statutory enactments whose force applied to all civil functionaries. At the same time, the service of pedagogical functionaries had a number of distinctive characteristics. Specifically, this category of public officers represented the nation's most educated group. Their job functions were not purely bureaucratic and often were directed at educating and nurturing future functionaries. There are a few other characteristics typical of the period's pedagogical functionaries, but they will be examined through a regional lens as part of a future study.

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