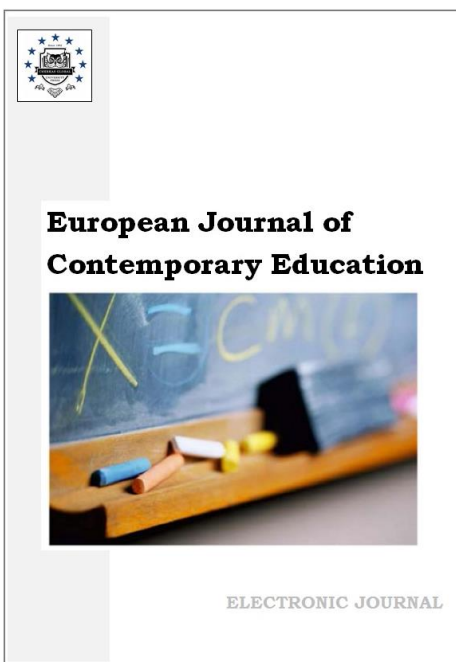




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Social Criteria Describing Literacy and Education Levels in Ukrainian Governorates within the Russian Empire at the end of the 19th century

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Abstract

This paper draws upon data from the Russian Imperial Census of 1897 to explore the literacy and education levels of residents of Ukrainian governorates within the Russian Empire at the end of the 19th century.

An analysis of statistical data from a number of relevant sources revealed discrepancies both in the percentage of literate people overall and among males and females in the Russian Empire.

It is impossible at this time to obtain conclusive data about the number of literate people both in the Russian Empire as a whole and in Ukrainian governorates within it in particular, as this information was gathered by different agencies and was not of a centralized nature. The data from the Russian Imperial Census of 1897 appear to be the most reliable in terms of objectivity, which may be associated with the fact that, in systematizing these data, use was made of a variety of data collection techniques, including census schedule, pilot census, linguistic survey, and survey by questionnaire.

The work proposes a conceptualization of the literate as citizens with at least elementary reading and writing skills, the literacy level as the share of literate citizens in a region, and the literacy index as the ratio of literate citizens to a region's total population.

An analysis was conducted of the characteristics of the education policies pursued by the Russian government at the time, and its results were summarized. An insight was gained into the overall influence of those policies on the literacy and education levels of residents of Ukrainian governorates within the Empire.

Literacy and education levels in Ukrainian governorates within the Russian Empire were analyzed through the lens of a number of factors (criteria), including regional characteristics, gender, age, estate, ethnicity, and religious affiliation.

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1. Introduction

History is an ideological science that often serves as an agent and weapon of propaganda. Without going into the specifics of how official historical narratives evolve and unfold over time, very often a particular historical theme or subject becomes a tool for manipulating collective and individual consciousness. This, in particular, is the case with the historical legacy of imperial Russia and the regions within it – Ukraine, for example. Manipulations of the historical past tend to be determined by an immediate political context.

When it, for instance, comes to recasting the Russian imperial legacy in the area of education to suit a Communist agenda, of particular interest is the cultivation of the “myth about illiterate tsarist Russia”, widely employed by the Bolsheviks and the subsequent Soviet government. It is worth quoting in this context the words of Vladimir Lenin, the leader of the Russian Bolsheviks, whose stance on that legacy was unambiguous. According to Lenin, no other nation in the world “has seen its populace experience so much deprivation in education, illumination, and knowledge.... The literate account for a mere 21 % of the Russian population and just 27 % exclusive of preschool age children, i.e. those aged below 9” (Lenin, 1973: 127). He based this estimate on official data from the Ministry of Public Education published in ‘The Russia Yearbook’.

At the same time, it should be noted that statistics on education were maintained in the Russian Empire by more than one agency. Apart from the actual Ministry of Public Education, such records were also monitored by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Military Ministry, all within the framework of their powers. This way of doing it somewhat complicated getting an accurate picture.

Specific figures from researchers will better illustrate this discrepancy about statistics on literacy in the Russian Empire at the end of the 19th century. For instance, M.N. Rutkevich puts it at 28.4 % (Rutkevich, 2007: 30), while E.V. Shcherbakova has it at 20.8 % (29 % among males and 12 % among females) (Shcherbakova, 2013: 276). B.N. Mironov speaks of 31 % literacy among males and 13 % literacy among females (Mironov, 2015), and these figures are actually lower than those provided in the researcher’s earlier work (Mironov, 1996).

This confirms the suggestion that these data discrepancies are a consequence of the use of a decentralized procedure for collecting statistical information in the Russian Empire. In this context, of particular interest are the results of the Russian Imperial Census of 1897, which was conducted using a set of special techniques, including census schedule, pilot census, linguistic survey, and survey by questionnaire. The availability of these data will be central to the ability to conduct a conclusive analysis of the literacy and education levels of residents of Ukrainian governorates within the Russian Empire, although there remains a probability of still getting *relative* results, given a variety of objective factors being at play.

Also of importance is to establish the meaning of certain terms used in the paper. More specifically, the term ‘literacy’ is construed herein as a command of reading and writing skills. The Census considered as literate individuals who had ‘literacy in Russian’, ‘literacy in other languages’, or ‘a level of education above primary school’ (Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904a-i). For the purposes of this paper, the literacy level is the share of literate citizens in a region, and the literacy index is the ratio of literate citizens to a region’s total population.

2. Materials and methods

To explore the literacy and education levels of residents of Ukrainian governorates within the Russian Empire, an analysis was conducted of relevant data (25 tables worth of information on demographics, religion, and economics) from the Russian Imperial Census of 1897.

In putting this paper together, use was made of a number of research methods, including concept analysis, content analysis, quantitative data analysis, and correlational analysis.

3. Discussion

The subject of public education and literacy in the Russian Empire has been researched quite extensively (e.g., Mironov, 1996; Petrov, 2002; Rutkevich, 2007; Saprykin, 2009; Shcherbakova, 2013). Some of the research indicates that there was “a chasm between the education levels of members of the upper strata of society and the low literacy levels of the bulk of the population –

above all, peasants (80% of the population)” (Rutkevich, 2007: 5). It should, however, be noted that this indicator varies depending on multiple factors.

Issues of literacy and education have more than once been explored in relation to various other subjects – for instance, in the context of the development of the system of public education in the Russian Empire as a whole and government policy in this area (e.g., Saprykin, 2009; Chekhov, 1912; Farmakovskij, 1903). Certain authors have appealed against the “simplistic ideological scheme” behind education policy in the Russian Empire as one that is about the “struggle of two tendencies” – “reactionary”, i.e. a focus on protecting the interests of elites via police-state tactics, and “progressive” liberal-bourgeois (Saprykin, 2009: 122). Arguably, this scheme does not reflect the objective processes associated with the development of the country’s education system, as it “overlooks the most essential factor – the government’s education policy” (Saprykin, 2009: 122-123).

It is between the 19th and early 20th centuries that the country’s “government and thinking intelligentsia actively undertook to improve the state of public education” in it (Shcherbakova, 2013: 274). Some researchers view the 19th century as “a critical period in the formation of the system of public education in the Russian Empire, when it underwent a transformation under the influence of various internal and external circumstances” (Vojtekhovskaya, 2013: 5).

Of significant interest are the research publications exploring public education in the Russian Empire via analysis of regional characteristics (e.g., Bohatchuk, 2017; Lebid et al., 2020; Polishchuk, 1996; Polishchuk, 1997; Prokopenko, 2016). In this respect, of particular mention is the fundamental study by S.O. Siropolko, which explores the education system in Ukraine in the period from 988 to the early 20th century. The work provides insight into a whole range of issues related to education in Ukraine during that period, including such issues inherent in the making and development of the region’s education system as staffing, funding, and organization (Siropolko, 2001).

The scholarly journals *Bylye Gody* and *The European Journal of Contemporary Education* regularly publish materials on various aspects of the development of the country’s public education system (e.g., Cherkasov et al., 2021a; Cherkasov et al., 2021b; Degtyarev et al., 2018; Magsumov et al., 2021; Natolochnaya et al., 2019). Research published by these journals typically involves a wide use of archival sources and documents and statistical and factual data, making it possible to explore issues of public education in the Russian Empire in a most systematic manner.

Issues of literacy and education in the Russian Empire have also been explored through the lens of social background (e.g., Lebid, 2022; Lihova, 2011; Prosvirnova, 2003), levels and stages of education (e.g., Ivanov, 1991; Lebid, Shevchenko, 2021; Novikov, Perfilova, 2012; Smirnov, 1954), and characteristics of female education (Lavrik-Slisenko, 2008; Lihacheva, 1901; Usacheva, Dneprov, 2010).

Worthy of separate mention are the statistical digests containing rich factual material on the history of the Russian Empire as a whole and issues of the development of its public education system in particular (e.g., Kol’b, 1862; Kulomzin, 1912; *Obozrenie, 1848-1850*; *Obozrenie, 1849-1850*; *Obozrenie, 1848-1851*; *Vseobshchaya perepis’, 1904a-i*). Relevant data from the Russian Imperial Census of 1897 and a set of scholarly insights into the various statutory, technical, and organizational aspects of its conduct (Brukhanova, Nezhentseva, 2018; Bryuhanova, 2019; Plandovskij, 1898; Polishchuk, 1996; Polishchuk, 1998) helped draw a series of conclusions regarding literacy and education levels in Ukrainian governorates within the Russian Empire at the end of the 19th century.

4. Results

The foundations of the education system in the Russian Empire were laid down by the reforms of Peter I, who was a proponent of implementing Western templates in education in parallel with popularizing sciences. It is at that time that the Russian education system began to undergo radical transformations. The reforms led to the establishment of a school of mathematics and navigation, an artillery school, an engineering school, and a medical school in Russia.

During the reign of Anna Ioannovna, the government initiated the establishment of mining schools tasked with training future specialists for the mining and metallurgy sector.

Under Empress Elizabeth Petrovna, the country’s a military training schools were reorganized and its network of primary schools was expanded. In 1755, Moscow became home to the Russian Empire’s first university.

In the 18th century, education in the Russian Empire was characterized by the following two key trends: 1) growth in the number of educational institutions across the country (e.g., Ernst Glück Gymnasium, Academic Gymnasium (Saint Petersburg), University (Academic) Gymnasium at Moscow University, Land Gentry Cadet Corps (Saint Petersburg), Medicine and Surgery Academy, Chernigov Collegium, Pereiaslav Collegium, and Kharkov Collegium); 2) preferential treatment of members of the country's privileged social estates, with members of the less privileged sectors of society facing increasingly more barriers in accessing education.

The education reform initiated by Catherine II resulted in the promulgation of the Statute on Public Schools in 1786, ordaining that four-grade "major public schools" be established in gubernia cities (Ustav, 1786: 3-13) and two-grade "minor public schools" be set up in uyezd cities across the country (Ustav, 1786: 14-15).

There were several critical changes in the education system resulting from the introduction of the above statute. Firstly, it was the introduction of so-called "subject-based schooling". For instance, first-graders at gubernia schools were to study subjects such as laws of Christianity, writing, and reading (Ustav, 1786: 3), while second-graders there were to take disciplines such as penmanship and arithmetic (Ustav, 1786: 6).

Secondly, it was the introduction of a lesson-based system and the use of fixed-length lessons and schedules (e.g., foreign language teachers regularly scheduled to work an 18-hour week) (Ustav, 1786: 13).

Thirdly, it was for the first time that dedicated attention was given to the development of curricula and teaching methodologies (Ustav, 1786: 10-11).

In the 19th century, with the advent of Alexander I in 1801, the country witnessed a number of reforms, including transformations in the area of education undertaken under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Education (established in 1802). The following four different types of educational institution were introduced: one-grade parish schools, three-grade uyezd schools, six-grade gubernia schools (gymnasiums), and universities (PSZRI, 1830a: 438).

In addition to the already operating universities in Moscow, Vilna, and Dorpat, the government was going to "set up universities in the Saint Petersburg District, Kazan, and Kharkov". "Kiev, Tobolsk, and some other cities [would] house a university" as per possibility and necessity (PSZRI, 1830a: 439).

The territory of the Russian Empire was split into six educational districts – Moscow University District, Vilna University District, Dorpat University District, "Saint Petersburg District", "District of the soon-to-be-established Kharkov University", and "District of the soon-to-be-established Kazan University". Each was to be headed by a trustee and each was to "incorporate specific governorates" (PSZRI, 1830a: 442).

The operation of the universities was regulated by the University Statute of 1804. On November 5, 1804, Emperor Alexander I signed into law "The Confirmatory Charter for Imperial Moscow University" (PSZRI, 1830b: 647-650), "The Confirmatory Charter for Imperial Kharkov University" (PSZRI, 1830b: 650-653), and "The Confirmatory Charter for Imperial Kazan University" (PSZRI, 1830b: 653-656), with each school also provided with a university charter granting them wide autonomy.

During this period, the country became home to a number of other educational institutions as well, including Practical Forest School in Saint Petersburg, Petersburg Institute of Pedagogy, Tsarskoye Selo Lyceum, Richelieu Lyceum, Volyn Lyceum, and Nezhin Lyceum.

The noteworthy results of Alexander I's education reforms include the emergence of continuity in education from the lower to the higher stage, expansion of the spectrum of curricula, democratization and humanization of education, improved education access for all strata of society, and improved accessibility of primary and secondary education to members of all social estates.

The education policy of the Nicholas I government, summed up in the "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality" doctrine (originally proposed by the then-Minister of Education, S.S. Uvarov), was to deal a "deadly blow to the yet-to-be-uprooted liberal and mystical sentiments persisting from the Alexander I era" (Novikov, Perfilova, 2012: 11). The concept behind this program would go down in history as "protective education".

The University Statute of 1835 strengthened the administrative vertical by making the educational district trustee a central figure within the education system and the rector a central

figure at the university level. The statute expanded the trustee's duties, providing them with wider authority within the university hierarchy. The rector was now empowered to exert control over the educational process, including in terms of its implementation and quality.

Among other things, the statute boosted administrative-police oversight over student behavior. There also were changes to the structure of university education, which included the following: reducing the number of departments from four to three, extending the length of the program of study to four years, introducing new courses with a focus on classic education, enabling international mobility for young scholars (programs of up to two years), and extending the number of departments and increasing the teaching workforce ([Tablica ustavov, 1901](#)). Essentially, the Statute of 1835 boosted state control over higher education in the Russian Empire.

The education reform undertaken during the reign of Nicholas I was characterized by its dedicated focus on education access based on social class. The edict issued on August 19, 1827, established the procedure for "admission to higher educational institutions for attending lectures and to lower schools for schooling". The edict prescribed that, taking account of "the probable future occupation of students", access to gymnasiums and universities be restricted for members of the peasant estate, limiting their education to attending parish schools. Gymnasium and university education was to be available only to children of functionaries and nobles ([Zakonodatel'stvo ob obrazovanii, 2017: 214-215](#)).

The reforms undertaken by Emperor Alexander II, known as Alexander the Liberator for his input into the emancipation of Russia's serfs in 1861, included transformations to the country's education system as well. The University Statute of 1863 reinstated the autonomy in administrative, financial, and educational matters taken away from Russian institutions of higher learning via the Statute of 1835, which would have a positive effect on the development and operation of the country's higher education system ([Ustav, 1863](#)).

During that period, the government undertook "robust measures to develop the primary public education sector, promote inclusive public education, and encourage public initiative in the organization of public schools" ([Zakonodatel'stvo ob obrazovanii, 2017: 488](#)). Tangible changes were implemented to secondary education as well – it was now declared to be comprehensive, easily accessible, and open to all social estates, although it would still have to be paid for, which made secondary education less accessible for members of disadvantaged classes. Overall, the education policy pursued during the reign of Emperor Alexander II resulted in growth in literacy levels across the Russian Empire, a greater focus on the development and enhancement of educational programs, and an increased focus on female education (e.g., introduction in 1869 of the so-called "higher women's courses" (e.g., Alarchin Higher Women's Courses and Vladimir Higher Women's Courses in Saint Petersburg and Lubyanka Higher Women's Courses in Moscow)).

A few words need to be said now about the Russian Imperial Census of 1897, one of the world's largest-scale statistics campaigns conducted on the cusp of the 19th and 20th centuries, which is the main data source employed in this paper.

The Census sought to collect socio-demographic information about the population of the Russian Empire at the end of the 19th century. The actual idea of conducting this kind of census dates back to 1876, when this issue was first brought up for discussion, with the Russian government going on to sign the relevant regulation into law on June 5, 1895 ([Polozhenie, 1897](#)).

The Census contained standard information on "all residents in the Empire, of both sexes, of all ages, and of all social, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, Russian nationals and foreigners alike". The data set consisted of 14 items dealing with the socio-demographic, ethnic-cultural, and religious characteristics of the Empire's population.

To organize the Census, the government established a census commission in Saint Petersburg (the principal one) and census commissions in governorates, uyezds, and major cities across the country. Special census commissions were set up in Saint Petersburg, Moscow, Kronstadt, Warsaw, Sevastopol, Nikolayev, Odessa, and Kerch – these were to perform the functions of gubernia and uyezd commissions in areas under their purview. General charge of the Census was assumed by the Minister of Internal Affairs, who was empowered to engage other agencies in the process too. The procedure for the conduct of the Census was established via a special regulation.

In the Census, the data were arranged into 25 tables. Using this information, the present study analyzed literacy rates in each of the Ukrainian governorates across age, regional characteristics, ethnicity, social estate, and gender. The relevant data were derived from the

Census's Table 3b ('Distribution of the Population by Gender, Age (years), and Literacy Level'), Table 8 ('Distribution of the Population by Social Estate'), Table 9 ('Distribution of the Population by Literacy, Education, Social Estate, and Age'), and Table 15 ('Distribution of the Population by Mother Tongue, Literacy Level, and Age').

Table 3b contained information about the population's literacy levels through the lens of age (1–110 years and up), gender (males and females), and regional (governorates, cities, and uyezds) characteristics.

Table 8 and Table 9 provided information on the social estate composition of governorates, cities, and uyezds in linkage with literacy and education levels among their residents. The focus in the present study was limited to the following key social estate categories covered by the Census: 1) nobles (hereditary and personal nobles and their family members; non-noble functionaries and their family members); 2) clergy (persons of ecclesiastical status of all Christian denominations and their family members); 3) urban estate (petit bourgeois, merchants, and distinguished citizens); 4) peasants (peasants proper, Cossacks, and foreign settlers). Among other things, Table 9 contained data on the education level of members of each of the estates, listing the following types of educational institution: universities and other higher educational institutions, vocational and technical higher schools, vocational secondary educational institutions, and higher and secondary military educational institutions.

Let us now analyze this information in the context of literacy rates in Ukrainian governorates within the Russian Empire.

Table 1. Literacy Level of Residents of Ukrainian Governorates within the Russian Empire (Gender Criterion) (Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904a: 12-25; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904b: 12-25; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904c: 12-27; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904d: 12-29; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904e: 12-31; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904f: 12-29; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904g: 12-31; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904h: 12-25; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904i: 12-35)

Governorate	Total population		Literate residents, by gender				Overall percentage of literate residents
			males		females		%
	males	females	people	%	people	%	
Kiev	1,767,288	1,791,941	486,105	27.5	156,168	8.7	18.0
Yekaterinoslav	1,091,715	1,021,959	344,147	31.5	110,137	10.7	21.4
Podolia	1,505,940	1,512,359	358,998	23.8	109,771	7.2	15.5
Poltava	1,376,539	1,401,612	382,570	27.7	88,443	6.3	16.9
Taurida	762,804	684,986	281,576	36.9	122,266	17.8	27.8
Kharkov	1,253,759	1,238,557	325,460	25.9	94,404	7.6	16.8
Kherson	1,400,981	1,332,631	490,475	35.0	217,525	16.3	25.8
Chernigov	1,118,696	1,179,158	332,843	29.7	86,054	7.2	18.2
Volyn	1,502,803	1,486,679	366,599	24.3	146,313	9.8	17.1
Total for Ukrainian governorates	11,780,525	11,649,882	3,368,773	28.5	1,131,081	9.7	19.2

Table 2. Literacy Level of Residents of Ukrainian Governorates within the Russian Empire (Estate Criterion) (Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904a: 54-81; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904b: 52-81; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904c: 46-69; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904d: 58-93; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904e: 60-95; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904f: 58-87; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904g: 62-97; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904h: 54-83; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904i: 66-107)

Governorate	Nobles		Clergy		Urban estate		Peasants	
	total, people	literate, %	total, people	literate, %	total	literate, %	total, people	literate, %
Kiev	60,529	78.4	16,496	77.3	695,254	34.5	2,769,432	12.1

Yekaterinoslav	20,349	75.4	7,038	74.9	223,086	46.2	1,847,397	17.4
Podolia	40,513	66.7	14,018	74.4	506,282	30.9	2,440,631	10.9
Poltava	41,030	30.1	16,163	33.1	256,229	13.9	2,459,824	1.5
Taurida	22,761	38.6	4,729	35.6	256,441	15.8	1,124,200	6.0
Kharkov	32,090	41.1	10,918	37.0	172,566	18.1	2,265,576	2.0
Kherson	50,495	40.2	8,002	37.7	772,197	13.4	1,848,430	4.5
Chernigov	27,868	35.2	11,335	36.3	280,590	13.9	1,973,954	1.7
Volyn	47,024	63.5	14,955	70.6	649,832	29.0	2,242,707	12.1

Table 3. Number of Residents with a Diploma from a University or Another Institution of Higher Learning (Estate Criterion) (Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904a: 54-81; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904b: 52-81; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904c: 46-69; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904d: 58-93; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904e: 60-95; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904f: 58-87; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904g: 62-97; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904h: 54-83; Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904i: 66-107)

Governorate	Nobles	Urban estate	Peasants
Kiev	4,140	1,456	120
Yekaterinoslav	937	244	18
Podolia	1,077	200	17
Poltava	1,042	144	7
Taurida	1,006	244	20
Kharkov	2,240	920	80
Kherson	2,663	906	30
Chernigov	971	157	45
Volyn	1,179	125	29

Overall, Ukrainian governorates within the Russian Empire posted relatively low literacy rates at the end of the 19th century. The rates varied across gender (Table 1), estate (Table 2; Table 3), and ethnicity. The literacy gaps between these governorates were mainly associated with socio-historical, religious, cultural, and regional factors.

Kiev Governorate. Overall, the literacy rate for this region reflects the same trends observed in the rest of the governorates – males posting higher literacy levels than females (Table 1), rural residents posting lower literacy levels than their urban counterparts, and a very low percentage of residents having a higher education (1.4% for males and 0.15% for females) (Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904b: IX).

Age-wise, the younger the age group in this region (except for 4-9-year-olds), the higher the percentage of literate residents, especially among males. In the region's rural areas, younger males, likewise, dominated females in literacy, with this gap being six-fold in the middle-aged group (30–49 years). The literacy gap between males and females was not as abysmal among urban residents in this region.

Yekaterinoslav Governorate. Literate residents in this region accounted for just a little over one-fifth of the region's population. It had three times as many literate males as females (31.5% and 10.7%, respectively) (Table 1). In the region's uyezds, the figure was one-third of the population, whereas it was significantly higher among the urban population (54.7 % in Yekaterinoslav, 48.6% in Mariupol, and 44.5% in Bakhmut) (Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904c: XII).

Education reforms had a substantial effect on the literacy levels of residents in this region, especially males. Specifically, between the 1860s and 1880s there was a significant increase in the share of literate residents in the region, especially among 20–29-year-olds, with the figure reaching 50 %.

The percentage of residents with a higher education in the region was 0.37%, vocational and technical – 0.14%, secondary – 2.5%, and secondary and higher military – 0.2%, with “just literate” residents, i.e. those with at least elementary reading and writing skills, accounting for 96.1% of the population (Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904c: XIII).

Ethnicity-wise, the ethnic groups with the highest literacy levels in the region were Jews and Germans, with members of these two groups accounting for the largest number of residents with a

level of education above primary school. A similar situation was observed in Taurida Governorate, where ethnic diversity, too, was a major factor shaping the region's literacy statistics.

Podolia Governorate. The region had an overall low level of literacy – a mere 15.5 %, the lowest among the governorates (Table 1). The percentage of urban literate residents in this region was 33.8 %.

The way in literacy level in the region was led by younger residents. However, the percentage of residents with a level of education above primary school was negligible there (around 0.5 %). Religion-wise, the way in literacy level was led by Protestants (73.1 % among males and 71.4 % among females), followed by Jews (41.3 % and 21.7 %, respectively), Catholics (24.3 % and 16.4%), Old Believers (22.4 % and 2.3 %), and Orthodox Christians (20.2% and 4%) (Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904d: IX).

While the commonest form of education in this region was general secondary education, the percentage of residents who had actually completed it was very low – just 0.5%. Matters were worse with higher education – a mere 0.06 % (Table 3).

As with the rest of the Ukrainian governorates, low literacy levels were posted in this region by females, especially in its rural areas (Table 1).

Poltava Governorate. The state of education in this region was characterized by a paradoxical situation – it had one school per 1,291 residents, or 329 persons of school age (6-15 years), which set it apart advantageously from other regions in the Empire. However, its low literacy figures (16.9 %) placed it among the three worst-performing regions in this respect, along with Podolia and Kharkov Governorates (Table 1).

Males in the governorate had higher literacy levels than females (27.7 % and 6.3 %, respectively), which was in harmony with tradition there. A similar picture was observed with the region's urban (39.8 %) and rural residents, with urban females, again in line with tradition, posting higher literacy levels (27.7 %) than their rural counterparts.

Low literacy levels (14.5 %) were posted by Ukrainians in the region, who made up the majority of its population (92.9 %).

Age-wise, the way in literacy level was led in this region by younger residents, especially urban residents and males, with three-fourths of the region's urban youth aged 10-19 being literate, compared with half among females. With the older age groups, the figure was smaller among both males (a little over half) and females (one-fifth). A similar trend was observed in the region's uyezds (Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904e: XXXI).

Taurida Governorate. The literate portion of this region's population was not very large (27.8 %). The region did not have a very large number of literate urban residents either (less than half). On a side note, literacy levels were typically higher in those uyezds of the Empire where the population was distributed more diversely and evenly between multiple ethnicities. For instance, uyezds dominated by a particular ethnographic group (mainly Slavs – ethnic Russians and Ukrainians) tended to have lower literacy levels than other uyezds. A good example is Dneprovsky Uyezd, where Slavs accounted for over 90 % of the population. This uyezd had the lowest literacy levels in the governorate, while the highest literacy levels in Taurida Governorate were registered in Perekopsky Uyezd, where the population was evenly comprised of a diversity of ethnicities (ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, Germans, and Tatars).

Males and females in the region, too, had relatively low literacy levels, with there being at the time twice as many literate males as females (36.9 % and 17.8 %, respectively) (Table 1). Across the region's uyezds, the gap was over double.

In terms of the ethnic criterion, the region, tellingly, had fewer literate residents among ethnic Russians and Ukrainians than among members of other ethnic groups. Specifically, the literacy figures in Taurida Governorate by ethnicity were as follows: Ukrainians – 30.9 % for males and 6.4 % for females (Table 3); ethnic Russians – 41.6 % and 20.2 %, respectively; Germans – 68.3 % and 67.0 %; Jews – 64.9 % and 43.6 % (Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904f: XIX).

Kharkov Governorate. This was one of the worst-performing regions in literacy, where, as in all of the remaining governorates, the situation with female literacy was pretty dismal (Table 1). The gap in literacy level between males and females was smaller in the region's cities than in uyezds there. In the cities, the proportion was 1/1.9, while in the uyezds it was 1/5. The most "educated" cities in this region were Kharkov (52.5 %), Chuguyev (41.8 %), and Sumy (40.5 %) (Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904g: XII).

As in Poltava Governorate, the state of education in this region was characterized by major gaps in literacy level through the lens of age and regional characteristics. Urban youth exhibited relatively high literacy levels. There was parity in literacy level between urban males and females. On the other hand, the gap was wider among older residents and outside the region's cities.

Kherson Governorate. Among the Ukrainian governorates, Kherson Governorate stood out as one of the most "educated" (25.8 %), second only to Taurida Governorate (Table 1). The gap in literacy level between males and females in this region was not as large as in other regions. The number of literate females in this governorate (16.3 %) was nearly twice the number of literate females in most of the remaining governorates, except for Taurida Governorate.

In this region, too, the state of education was characterized by gaps in literacy level between urban and rural residents, including through the lens of age (similar to the situation in Poltava and Kharkov Governorates).

In line with tradition and with the state of affairs in other Ukrainian governorates, the way in education level was led in this region by members of the clergy and nobility (Table 2). Among males, the way was led by members of the clergy and hereditary nobility, and among females – by both hereditary and personal nobles. Most of the region's educated residents were graduates of secondary educational institutions (especially, among females), while graduates of higher military educational institutions constituted the minority of its educated residents (Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904h: XIV). Of particular note is the fact that, relative to other regions of Ukraine, the region had a fairly large number of university graduates, especially among the nobility, as well as among members of the urban estate and peasantry (Table 3).

Chernigov Governorate. Similar to the rest of the Ukrainian governorates, the state of education in Chernigov Governorate was characterized by low literacy rates (Table 1). The way in this respect was led by younger citizens, males, and urban residents. In this region, females living in uyezds had somewhat higher literacy levels than those living in cities. Things were opposite with males, as was the case in each of the other Ukrainian governorates (Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904i: XXII). Particularly abysmal was the situation with education among the region's peasantry, with Chernigov Governorate joining Poltava Governorate in the worst performer category relative to Ukraine's other regions (1.7% and 1.5%, respectively) (Table 2).

Volyn Governorate. Overall, the state of education in this governorate was characterized by the same processes as in the rest of the Ukrainian governorates in terms of the gender, regional, and age aspects. A distinctive characteristic of education in Volyn Governorate is the Orthodox Christian population posting a low literacy level – 11.6 %, with females performing very poorly in this respect – 3.7 %. Members of other denominations in the region exhibited higher literacy levels, which is the case with females as well (Protestants – 38.1 % (females – 36.1 %); Jews – 32.8 % (females – 21.6 %)). Of particular note is that within the governorate's Muslim population females posted higher literacy levels than males (46.6 % versus 26.6 %). Absurd as it may seem to some, this is due to the fact that most of the region's Muslim females belonged to a russified Tatar colony, while its male Muslim population was dominated by men coming from Eastern governorates who were not permanent residents in the region, most of whom had low literacy levels" (Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904a: XIV).

Among the ethnic groups in Volyn Governorate, the way in education level was led by Czechs (59 %), followed by Germans (37.8 %), ethnic Russians (37 %), Jews, Poles, and Tatars, with Ukrainians, who accounted for 70 % of the governorate's population, bringing up the rear (9.2 %) (Vseobshchaya perepis', 1904a: XIV).

5. Conclusion

The literacy and education levels of residents of Ukrainian (and other) governorates within the Russian Empire can be explored based on various statutory documents (e.g., those containing criminal justice or conscription statistics) and statistical sources (e.g., censuses). The research reported in this paper was based on literacy data from the Russian Imperial Census of 1897.

Literacy and education levels in Ukrainian governorates within the Russian Empire were governed by a number of interconnected factors (criteria), including regional characteristics, gender, age, estate, ethnicity, and religious affiliation.

In terms of the gender criterion, the percentage of literate females in Ukrainian governorates was significantly lower than that of males. Overall, this gap was as large as threefold (and even sixfold). This picture was consistent across the governorates.

This state of affairs can be attributed to a traditionally male-dominated environment in those regions at the time. Female education remained a neglected topic up until the mid-19th century, when women's push for equal education opportunities with men gained momentum.

In terms of the age criterion, the way in literacy level was led by younger residents (especially in cities), who outperformed their middle-aged counterparts and were ahead of senior residents by a wide margin. The picture was even worse in rural areas.

Essentially, there were a few other factors behind the age and regional differences in literacy and education levels in these regions, like, for instance, the actual need for literacy and the intensity of socio-cultural life in a region. In a sense, the actual environment acted as a driver of the development of education and literacy, with some "illiterate" regions exhibiting increased growth in literacy levels as a result of literacy-boosting measures being implemented on a mass scale.

As far as the regional criterion, urban residents had much higher literacy and education levels than their rural counterparts. What is more, while differences in literacy and education levels between urban males and females and between younger and older residents were just obvious, such differences were abysmal in rural areas.

In the context of exploring literacy and education levels in the regions through the lens of religion, ethnicity, and social background, it should be noted that the bulk of the population in those areas was made up of Orthodox Christian peasants. Statistics indicate that this particular segment posted the lowest percentage of literate residents, with the Orthodox Christian population trailing behind all major religious communities within Ukrainian governorates – Old Believers, Catholics, and especially Jews and Protestants. Even among females, the gaps were very wide. For instance, in Podolia Governorate, 71.4 % literacy among Protestant females contrasted with 4 % literacy among Orthodox Christian females.

The bulk of the Ukrainian population being made up of peasants (e.g., 77.8 % in Kiev Governorate and 85.9 % in Chernigov Governorate) was one of the key factors that predetermined the areas' low literacy and education rates. Peasantry remained the least literate social group – especially, its female members. Very few peasants had a primary, not to mention secondary or higher, education.

The most literate and educated social group was made up of members of the clergy and nobles, most of whom had a gymnasium education, while significantly fewer had a university one. Very few female nobles had a university diploma.

In essence, the state of literacy and education in Ukrainian governorates within the Russian Empire was a direct consequence of the education policy pursued by the government through most of the period prior to the conduct of the Russian Imperial Census of 1897.

The two key reasons behind the governorates' overall low literacy and education rates are as follows: 1) the government having paid insufficient attention to public education for a long period of time (it was not before the reign of Emperor Alexander II that the Russian government undertook systematic transformations to democratize and humanize the country's education system); 2) schooling not being a highly valued tradition with the actual population, with most regarding the practice of education as redundant.

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