

MANAGEMENT OF THE ODESA EDUCATIONAL DISTRICT IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19th CENTURY (ON THE EXAMPLE OF BESSARABIA AND KHERSON GOVERNORATES)

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Abstract. *The article examines the peculiarities of the development of education in the Bessarabia and Kherson Governorates in the context of the administrative policy of the Odesa Educational District. In the second half of the 19th century, the article traces the attempts of the Russian Empire to fulfil two main tasks: to overcome any national influence (Romanian, Moldovan, German, Bulgarian and Jewish) through gradual Russification and to expand the network of institutions through the financial participation of local communities. It was the region's ethnic diversity that led to greater attention to educational development in Bessarabia and Kherson Governorates, and the distrust of the local population towards assimilationist innovations only slowed plans to rapidly integrate existing schools into the Russian-speaking space for a few years. Officials of the Odesa Educational District openly criticised the educational institutions of ethnic communities, accusing them of being unsuitable for practical life, inertia, and a lack of interest in the rural population. By the end of the 19th century, the authorities neutralised all threats with several decisions: the abolition of the study of the "Moldovan language", the re-subordination of former colonial schools, the renewal of teaching staff, the transition to Russian-language education, centralisation of management, and the expansion of the number of inspectors of public schools.*

Keywords: *education, district, trustee, inspectors, Russification, ethnic, colonists.*

Rezumat. *Managementul Districtului educațional Odesa în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea (exemplul guvernămintelor Basarabia și Herson). Sunt examinate*

particularitățile dezvoltării învățământului în guvernămintele Basarabia și Herson în contextul politicii administrative a Districtului Educațional Odesa. Pentru a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea, sunt urmărite încercările Imperiului Rus de a îndeplini două sarcini principale: de a înlătura orice influență națională (românească, moldovenească, germană, bulgară și evreiască) printr-un proces treptat de rusificare și de a extinde rețeaua de instituții prin participarea financiară a comunităților locale. Diversitatea etnică a regiunii a determinat o atenție sporită asupra dezvoltării educației în guvernămintele Basarabia și Herson, iar neîncrederea populației locale față de inovațiile asimilaționiste a întârziat doar câțiva ani planurile de integrare rapidă a școlilor existente în spațiul de limbă rusă. Funcționarii Districtului Educațional Odesa au criticat deschis instituțiile de învățământ ale comunităților etnice, acuzându-le de nepotrivire cu viața practică, inerție și lipsă de interes din partea populației rurale. Până la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea, autoritățile au neutralizat toate aceste amenințări prin mai multe decizii: abolirea studiului „limbii moldovenești”, resubordonarea fostelor școli coloniale, înnoirea corpului profesoral, trecerea la educația în limba rusă, centralizarea conducerii și extinderea numărului de inspectori ai școlilor publice.

INTRODUCTION

The vast territory of the Russian Empire resulted in a multinational population, but not in the adaptation of the governance model to ensure the rights of representatives of all peoples. Moreover, the desire to “erase” ethnic differences was crucial, as it was seen as a factor in maintaining political stability. In the late 1860s and early 1870s, the Russian Empire began to pursue a deliberate policy of spreading the Russian language among the so-called “allogenuous population” (“*inorodtsy*”). Within its framework, significant attention was paid to the Bessarabia Oblast and Kherson Governorate, which, from a geographical point of view, formed an integral region. It was distinguished by the extreme multiethnicity of its population and the presence of landed property owned by former European colonists. With this in mind, the leadership of the Odesa Educational District (which included these Governorates) emphasised the need for “special care” from the government in the field of education. The Ministry of National Education linked the increased attention to the Russian Empire’s geopolitical interests. In their annual reports, local governors outlined the need to neutralise Romanian influence, overcome the “religious split” (the fight against non-Orthodox churches), reduce the outflow of the younger generation abroad, and increase Jewish community involvement in maintaining educational institutions.¹

¹ *Obzor Bessarabskoi oblasti za 1870 god* [Review of the Bessarabian region for 1870],

Certain aspects of the development of education in the multinational Black Sea regions during the period of the Russian Empire's rule, particularly in the second half of the 19th century, are reflected in the works of historians from the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Ukraine, and Germany. The colonisation processes and, accordingly, the central government's policy towards different ethnic groups are of particular interest to researchers. An extensive chronological perspective of the study of German issues can be traced in the works of Alfred Ziebart,² Ute Schmidt,³ Valentina Chirtoagă,⁴ Kateryna Lyah.⁵ Their analyses contain a reasoned opinion on the government's interference in the usual way of life of local communities and its attempts to subordinate the educational process to national priorities.

The scientific works of Russian scholars form a separate historiographical category.⁶ Their distinctive feature is the use of assessments typical of the imperial period, a certain idealisation of state policy, or inadequate consideration of the interests of ethnic communities in Bessarabia and, more generally, in the Black Sea region. The life of the region's urban population is comprehensively presented in Natalia Abakumova-Zabunova's book, which focuses mainly on

Kishinev, Bessarabskii gubernskii statisticheskii komitet, 1871, pp. 31, 36; *Obzor Bessarabskoi oblasti za 1872 god*, 1873, p. 18–19; *Obzor Khersonskoi gubernii za 1871 god* [Review of the Kherson Governorate for 1871], Kherson, Tipografiya gubernskogo pravleniya, 1872, p. 22.

² Alfred Ziebart, *Arzis Bessarabien. Blick auf 150 Jahre Kolonistenleben und-schicksal 1816–1966*, Ludwigsburg, Selbstverlag des Verfassers, 1966, 381 p.

³ Ute Schmidt, *Die Deutschen aus Bessarabien. Eine Minderheit aus Südosteuropa Ost- und Südosteuropa (1814 bis heute)*, Köln, Böhlau Verlag GmbH & Cie, 2004, 600 p.

⁴ Valentina Chirtoagă, *Etnicii germani din Basarabia: evoluție demografică, socio-economică și cultural-spirituală (1814–1917), teză de doctor în istorie* [Ethnic Germans from Bessarabia: demographic, socioeconomic, cultural and spiritual evolution (1814–1917), thesis for the degree of Doctor in History, Chișinău, 2018, 170 p.

⁵ Kateryna Liakh, *Nimetskomovni kolonisty Pivdnia Ukrainy v multynatsionalnomu otochenni: problema vzaiemodii kultur (XIX – pochatok XX st.)* [German-speaking colonists of southern Ukraine in a multinational environment: the problem of cultural interaction (XIX – beginning of XX century)], Dissertation for the scientific degree of candidate of historical sciences, Zaporizhzhia, 2005, 269 p.

⁶ Vyacheslav Stepanov, *German Colonists from Bessarabia in Russian Historical Literature of the 19th – Early 20th Centuries*, in “Codrul Cosminului”, 2022, Vol. XXVIII, no. 1, p. 55–72; Vladimir Morozan, *Bessarabiya i yee dvoryanstvo v XIX – nachale XX v.* [Bessarabia and the Bessarabian nobility in the XIX and early XX centuries], Sankt-Peterburg, Dmitrii Bulanin, 2018, Vol. 1–2.

improving governance and creating favourable conditions for the region's socio-economic development.⁷

There are no similar sentiments in the works of European scholars. Andrei Cusco presented the broader context of Bessarabia's status and importance through the prism of competing strategies of the Russian Empire and Romania.⁸ Nicolae Ciachir argued that after 1867, “education was put at the service of Russification of the Romanian element.”⁹ Tatiana Chicaroș has focused directly on these processes, and in the context of the South of Ukraine, by Ivan Zadereychuk¹⁰ and Liliia Tsyganenko.¹¹ Gheorghe Negru conducted the most detailed analysis of the Russification policy in education in Bessarabia.¹² Based on the collected data, he identified two chronological stages: 1) 1866–1872 – the introduction of restrictions on the Romanian language and the creation of a Russian system of primary and secondary education; 2) 1873–1900 – the imposition of Russian language learning on the rural population, accelerated growth in the number of primary schools, and a radical transformation of cultural realities.¹³

In the case of the Odesa Educational District, this approach needs to be complemented by an overview of general changes in management policies,

⁷ Natalya Abakumova-Zabunova, *Russkoe naselenie gorodov Bessarabii XIX v.* [Russian population of the cities of Bessarabia in the 19th century], Kishinev, Business-Elita, 2006, 520 p.

⁸ Andrei Cusco, *Between Nation and Empire: Russian and Romanian Competing Visions of Bessarabia in the Second Half of the 19th and Early 20th Century*, Dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Budapest, 2008, 526 p.; Idem, *A Contested Borderland: Competing Russian and Romanian Visions of Bessarabia in the Second Half of the 19th and Early 20th Century*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2017, 345 p.

⁹ Nicolae Ciachir, *Basarabia voievodală românească până la sfârșitul celui de-al doilea război mondial* [The Romanian Voivodal Bessarabia until the end of World War II], București, Editura Oscar Print, 1999, p. 76.

¹⁰ Ivan Zadereychuk, *Rozvytok systemy osvity v nimtsiv na Pivdni Ukrainy 1789–1938 rr.* [The development German's education system on South Ukraine 1789–1938], Dissertation for the scientific degree of candidate of historical sciences, Simferopol, 2005, 245 p.

¹¹ Liliia Tsyganenko, *Dvorianstvo Pivdnia Ukrainy (druha polovyna XVIII st. – 1917 r.)* [Nobility of Southern Ukraine (second half of XVIII – 1917)], Izmail, Smyl, 2009, 384 p.

¹² Gheorghe Negru, *Politica țaristă de rusificare a învățământului și „realitățile nefavorabile” din Basarabia (a doua jumătate a sec. al XIX-lea)* [The tsarist policy of russification of education and the “unfavorable realities” in Bessarabia (second half of the 19th century)], in “Revista de Istorie a Moldovei”, 2023, no. 3–4 [135–136], p. 30–51.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 50–51.

consideration of the factor of other ethnic communities, and a focus on supervisory practices and financial aspects.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN THE 1860s AND 1870s

A key factor in the Odesa Educational District's management policy was the presence of numerous communities of former colonists. They were concerned about their children's access to education and used financial instruments to support it. In the Kherson Governorate, colonists were concentrated in Odesa, Kherson, and Tiraspol Uyezd. The local German schools were located in beautiful buildings, and education was compulsory. The Zemstvo noted that the Bulgarian and Jewish rural population paid much less attention to education.¹⁴ However, while local governments were concerned about literacy levels, school conditions, and the quality of teaching staff, the central government had somewhat different priorities of imperial importance. They were explicitly outlined in 1870, when the Trustee of the Odesa Educational District, S. Holubtsov, called on the government to get rid of "delicacy towards alien" and not to be afraid of accusations of "selfishness and intolerance". At the same time, education was given the role of a tool for the mythical "restoration of the legitimate rights of the persecuted Russian language", Russification of "alien" and "merger with the Russian people."¹⁵

At the regional level, this approach had been implemented several years earlier. In early 1866, the government cancelled the teaching of "Moldovan [hereinafter referred to as the document] in the Chişinău gymnasium, and in 1871, in all Uyezd schools in Bessarabia.¹⁶ The aforementioned Trustee of the Odesa Educational District, S. Holubtsov, was an effective conductor of this policy, who, during his long leadership (1866–1880), proved to be a reliable executor of the instructions of Minister D. Tolstoy.

Starting in 1818, after Bessarabia was annexed to the Russian Empire, the authorities declared their intention to organise local schools in accordance with the national system.¹⁷ At the same time, a separate provision of the Committee of

¹⁴ *Sbornik Khersonskogo zemstva* [Collection of Kherson Zemstvo], Kherson, Tipografiya N. Vashchenko, 1875, no. 12, p. 509–510.

¹⁵ *Sbornik rasporyazhenii po Ministerstvu narodnogo prosveshcheniya. 1865–1870* [Collection of orders for the Ministry of Public Education], Sankt-Peterburg, Tipografiya Imperatorskoi akademii nauk, Vol. 4, 1874, p. 833–835.

¹⁶ Gheorghe Negru, *op. cit.*, pp. 34, 40.

¹⁷ *Ustav obrazovaniya Bessarabskoi Oblasti* [Charter on the Formation of the Bessarabian

Ministers of 1827 provided for the preservation of the study of the “Moldovan language” in only two uyezd schools – in Chişinău and Bălţi.¹⁸ The following year, at the request of the local nobility, this list was expanded. Thus, by 1871, the “Moldovan language” was included in the curriculum of schools in five county towns (Chişinău, Bălţi, Khotyn, Orhei, Soroca). This practice was cancelled based on a petition filed by S. Golubtsov. He argued for expediency due to the lack of people willing to learn the “Moldovan language” and the shortage of teachers. He also mentioned the “need to strengthen the teaching of the Russian language”. The first argument is implausible, given that even 22 years later, some nobles asked for permission to use Romanian at their meetings.¹⁹

The Novorossiysk and Bessarabia Governor-General P. Kotsebu supported Golubtsov's initiative, as the “Moldovan language” is “not used today either in educational institutions or in administrative and judicial institutions”. It is allegedly only “a local dialect of a part of the rural population, which is introducing folk schools with subjects taught exclusively in Russian.”²⁰ These words perfectly reflected the essence of the educational policy, which provided for only temporary concessions.

In 1869, the colonists successfully petitioned for the establishment of one scholarship each for their children at Novorossiysk University and at one of the Odesa gymnasiums. In the first case, the Bulgarian communities of Bessarabia allocated a capital of three thousand rubles. The interest from this capital was to be used to pay for education. The community of the Kuchurhan colonial district of the Kherson Governorate undertook to allocate 200 rubles per scholarship student annually.²¹ In 1808, it was founded by German immigrants, mainly from Baden and Alsace. For a long time, they enjoyed the right to self-government, which contributed to their socio-economic development. However, in 1871, the

Oblast], Kishinev, 1818, p. 12.

¹⁸ *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii* [Complete collection of laws of the Russian Empire], Sankt-Peterburg, Tip. 2-go Otd-niya Sobstv. Yee Imperat. Velichestva kantselyarii, Assembly 2, Vol. 2 (1827), 1830, p. 955.

¹⁹ Gheorghe Negru, *Mișcarea națională în Basarabia în a doua jumătate a sec. al XIX-lea – începutul sec. al XX-lea* [The national movement in Bessarabia in the second half of XIX – early XX century], in “Deputatul în Sfatul Țării Andrei Găină – unificator de țară” [Materialele Conferinței Științifice], Chişinău, Editura Lexon-Prim, 2013, p. 75.

²⁰ *Sbornik postanovlenii po Ministerstvu narodnogo prosveshcheniya. 1871–1873* [Collection of resolutions on the Ministry of Public Education], Sankt-Peterburg, Tipografiya V. Balasheva, Vol. 5, 1877, p. 49–50.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, 1871, p. 1451.

district was divided into three Volosts (Baden, Selz, and Mannheim) within the Odesa Uyezd, with the subsequent approval of the imperial zemstvo administration. In the mid-1880s, the number of German colonists in the six largest settlements of these Volosts alone was over 10,000.²²

The authorities' cautious, or even suspicious, attitude towards the region's ethnic communities led to heightened vigilance. For example, the Mykolaiv gymnasium employed a special "supervisor of state pupils from the children of Southern Slavs, Greeks, and Moldovan Wallachians". In 1867, three years after the approval of the new Statutes of gymnasiums, the position was renamed to an official on special assignments under the Minister of National Education.²³ This meant that he received the classical status of a gymnasium inspector, the second person in the institution (after the headmaster), who was directly subordinate to the Trustee of the Odesa Educational District.

As a result of the next war with Turkey in 1877–1878, the Russian Empire annexed southern Bessarabia. It introduced several legislative changes in educational policy to neutralise Romanian influence over the 144 schools there.²⁴ For this purpose, the authorities were concerned about the need for additional financial expenditures. This was explained by the "exceptional position of primary schools in the annexed part of Bessarabia". In 1880, 49.2 thousand rubles were allocated for the maintenance of 88 existing public schools and four new ones. Most of the amount (75%) was allocated as a one-time lump sum for building repairs and equipment. The main burden was borne by local communities, which provided annual allocations of over 75 thousand rubles. The District Trustee S. Golubtsov complained that Romanian teachers had left for Dobruja and "took all the teaching aids with them."²⁵ Under the new government and the cancellation of the study of the "Moldovan language" nine years earlier, they could not be used a priori. The establishment of book warehouses in every county of the Bessarabia Governorate also evidences this. By the end of the 1870s, the Directorate of public schools reported that the

²² *Volosti i vazhneishie seleniya Yevropeiskoi Rossii* [Volosts and Most Important Villages of European Russia], Sankt-Peterburg, Tipografiya Ministerstva vnutrennikh del, Vol. 8, pp. 96–97.

²³ *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniya* [Journal of the Ministry of Public Education], Sankt-Peterburg, Pechatnya V. Golovina, Vol. 135, 1867, p. 3.

²⁴ *Obzor Bessarabskoi gubernii za 1878 god*, 1879, p. 10.

²⁵ *Sbornik postanovlenii po Ministerstvu narodnogo prosveshcheniya. 1877–1881*, Vol. 7, 1883, p. 1480–1483.

problem of textbook shortages had been “eliminated forever.”²⁶ Subsequently, the leadership of the Odesa Educational District regularly drew the attention of educational institutions to the inspection of libraries to identify unapproved or inappropriate books for “educational purposes.”²⁷

THE IMPACT OF THE FINANCIAL FACTOR ON THE EXPANSION OF THE EDUCATIONAL NETWORK

In 1880, S. Holubtsov requested financial support for the opening of 6 city schools – in Izmail, Bolhrad, Kiliia, Reni, Cahul, and Vylkove. This required about 18.4 thousand rubles, with another 10.2 thousand provided by local communities. They were also responsible for arranging the premises. The local population was so interested in the creation of new educational institutions that they sometimes agreed to introduce additional taxes to cover the costs (Kiliia). Without the financial participation of urban communities, the opening of schools was out of the question. In some cases, they not only provided the larger share of the budget but even maintained the educational institution on their own. A typical example is the one-class school opened the day before in Bolhrad. The “sympathetic attitude” of the urban communities of the “former Romanian part of Bessarabia”, which was expressed in significant donations, was even noted by the Minister of National Education, D. Tolstoy.²⁸

In the following years, on the initiative of the local population, the region's network of educational institutions continued to expand. By supporting such requests, the central government sought to achieve its own goals, primarily “to secure forever the part of Bessarabia reunited with Russia”. Examples include the opening of:

- gymnasiums: in Akkerman (1879), Chişinău (1884), and Bolhrad (1884);
- progymnasiums: in Izmail (1880), Tiraspol (female, 1893);
- city schools: in Akkerman (1878), Vylkove (1880), Cahul (1880), Kiliia (1880), Reni (1880), Bolhrad (1880), and Izmail (1880);
- real school in Comrat (based on the central German school, 1888), a craft

²⁶ *Vestnik Bessarabskogo zemstva* [Herald of the Bessarabian Zemstvo], Kishinev, Gubernskaya zemskaya uprava, 1881, no. 7–8, p. 14.

²⁷ *Derzhavnyi arkhiv Mykolaivskoi oblasti* [State Archive of Mykolayiv Oblast], Fond 131, Opys. 1, Sprava 32, p. 17.

²⁸ *Sbornik postanovlenii po Ministerstvu narodnogo prosveshcheniya. 1877–1881*, Vol. 7, 1883, p. 1535–1540.

school in Chişinău (1881), a women's school in Izmail (1880), etc.

Nevertheless, neither in cities nor in villages did the number of schools meet the needs of the population, as even officials of the relevant department have repeatedly noted. In the neighbouring Kherson Governorate, the ministry rejected a request to open a real school in Kherson for several years. The reasons given for the refusal were the existence of similar institutions in Mykolaiv and Odesa, and the high potential costs.²⁹ It was only in 1876 that the community finally obtained permission.

Sometimes the reports did not indicate the dates of establishment of a new school, but rather the reorganisation of an existing school into a higher type. This can be seen in the case of the 8th-grade gymnasium in Bolhrad, which was opened in 1880 on the site of the former central school. Considering the local ethnic composition of the population and funding from the colonists of the surrounding settlements, it retained the teaching of Bulgarian history, language and literature “in the afternoon... in the form of optional subjects... no more than 12 lessons per week.”³⁰ Children of the settlers of the surrounding 38 communities were entitled to study at the gymnasium free of charge. Four years later, elected representatives of the Bulgarian communities even joined the newly created board of trustees. It managed the school's property and ensured its material well-being. It was a rare case when an ethnic community not only financed a gymnasium but also controlled its expenditures and used its facilities to provide free education for children. In 1888, the local population managed to preserve a separate preparatory class. Then the Ministry decided to eliminate them everywhere to weed out children of lower classes.³¹

It should be acknowledged that the lack of finance was an objective constraint on the expansion of the network of educational institutions throughout the Russian Empire. In cases where political factors were not involved, much depended on the local communities' capacity. In the multiethnic Black Sea region, opportunistic state motives were not absent. The Bessarabian lands had their own peculiarities. Since 1876, one of the sources of funding for local public schools has been the income from local monastery estates, which were transferred to state management. Around $\frac{2}{5}$ of the funds were allocated to educational, charitable, and pious needs, amounting to over 110 thousand rubles annually. However, the

²⁹ *Sbornik Khersonskogo zemstva*, 1875, no. 1, p. 76–77.

³⁰ *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii*, Assembly 2, Vol. 54 (1880), 1881, p. 367.

³¹ *Sbornik postanovlenii po Ministerstvu narodnogo prosveshcheniya. 1884*, Vol. 9, 1893, p. 498–502; *Ibid.*, Vol. 10, 1894, pp. 802–803, 1052–1053.

primary recipients were theological schools.³² At the beginning of 1882, the total amount of relevant capital accumulated by the Ministry of National Education exceeded 410 thousand rubles.

In 1880, the treasury allocated almost 50 thousand rubles for the maintenance of 88 rural schools in the annexed part of Bessarabia, while the communities themselves allocated about 72.6 thousand rubles. The treasury allocated just over 20% of the total budget. City administrations, zemstvos and rural communities replenished the rest. The latter covered the larger share of expenses – up to 70%, amounting to 130 thousand rubles. Over five years, this amount increased to almost 231 thousand rubles. However, the total share in the education budget decreased to 62% due to the increased efforts of city administrations (15%), primarily in financing their own schools.³³ By the beginning of the 20th century, the role of the zemstvos had increased due to further reductions in the participation of rural communities and the state. At the turn of the century, the educational budget of the Bessarabia Governorate was over 600 thousand rubles, of which the treasury allocated less than 90 thousand. The rest was provided by the following sources: rural communities (over 270,000), zemstvos (up to 120,000), and city administrations (up to 100,000).³⁴

Much of the money was spent on building maintenance, especially on the construction of new buildings. In 1884, the lack of, or inadequate, premises for educational institutions in the Odesa Educational District was under consideration at the ministry level. To establish gradual construction, the then Trustee, P. Lavrovskiy, requested additional funds. “Even in such a rich and industrial city as Odesa, it is impossible to find buildings that could accommodate a particular educational institution in accordance with pedagogical and hygienic requirements, and every building, without exception, has to be overhauled,” he stated in his submission. Additional arguments were constant repairs, rising rent, searching for new premises, moving, etc. As a result, the central government approved the proposed programme for the phased construction of its own facilities. A necessary condition was the free allocation of land plots by municipal administrations and the return of all amounts to the state budget in the future. In

³² *Bessarabiya: geograficheskii, istoricheskii, statisticheskii, ekonomicheskii, etnograficheskii, literaturnii i spravochanii sbornik* [Bessarabia. Geographic, historical, statistical, economic, ethnographic, literary and reference collection], Moskva, Gazeta “Bessarabets”, 1903, p. 283.

³³ *Vestnik Bessarabskogo zemstva*, 1881, no. 7–8, p. 35–37; *Ibid.*, 1885, no. 12, p. 72–79.

³⁴ *Bessarabiya, op. cit.*, p. 65.

the Kherson Governorate, there were about five progymnasiums, three gymnasiums, and a real school in Odesa, Kherson, Ananiv, Voznesensk, and Yelysavethrad. In Bessarabia, it covered only three progymnasiums and one real school in Chişinău, Akkerman and Izmail. A significant part of the funds was to be covered by the remaining amounts of other educational institutions. They were also planned to be gradually returned after moving to a new building. For example, the 2nd Odesa gymnasium was to use the balances of 28 educational institutions from four Governorates in the District. The amount was almost 78 thousand rubles, and the return was to take place by 1894.³⁵

The ambitious plan for large-scale construction could not be fully implemented, and most of the problems persisted into the next decade. Sometimes, because they lacked their own premises, educational institutions were forced to move every 2–3 years. For example, the Mykolaiv Uyezd School changed rented buildings in 1887, 1889, 1891, 1897, and the years following the reorganisation. Most of the moves were caused by the owners' reluctance to renew the contract. In 1887, the school had to wait a long time for permission to rent a new building from the director of schools in the Kherson Governorate. The institution was even preparing to rent a “shed for the storage of property” and “be ready to move out into the street.”³⁶

The issues of reorganisation, construction, repairs, etc., were mostly resolved on an individual basis. Each time, the main obstacle was financial difficulties. For example, in 1898, the State Council agreed to allocate 1,700 rubles annually from the treasury to the Tiraspol Uyezd School. It was granted the status of a four-year school, but was located in an “old building with dangerous cracks, extremely neglected, and with only three rooms”. A year later, the Akkerman three-class school began to receive an additional sum (1.26 thousand rubles). It was planned to be reorganised into a five-grade school, but the community lacked the funds. At that time, the city allocated 25% of its revenues to education.³⁷ Similar processes were taking place in Odesa, Kherson and other large settlements.

³⁵ *Sbornik postanovlenii po Ministerstvu narodnogo prosveshcheniya. 1884*, Vol. 9, 1893, p. 1096–1116.

³⁶ *Derzhavnyi arkhiv Mykolaiivskoi oblasti*, Fond 131, Opys. 1, Sprava 225, p. 8–15; *Ibid.*, Sprava 253, p. 1–3; *Ibid.*, Sprava 358, p. 41–42.

³⁷ *Sbornik postanovlenii po Ministerstvu narodnogo prosveshcheniya. 1897–1898*, Vol. 15, 1902, p. 1425–1426; *Ibid.*, Vol. 16, 1903, p. 993–995.

RUSSIFICATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

Political factors influenced the development of education in Bessarabia. The report of the Directorate of Public Schools for 1879–1880 noted that the spread of the Russian language “depends on the increase in the number of educational institutions.” About women's education, the document explained that “girls... in the future, as mothers, unnoticed by themselves, will pass on to their children both knowledge of the Russian language and the desire to learn it”. The approach to rural schools was similar. During the visits, the inspectors focused on checking reading in Russian, knowledge of the history and geography of the Russian Empire. Incorrect word accents were perceived as a regularity. “The majority of the population of Bessarabia is Moldovan, and the teachers themselves, not hearing the correct Russian language, often make mistakes...”, the official noted.³⁸

Gradually, the teaching staff was renewed. The government shifted its focus from educating girls to training teachers.³⁹ The priority was given to educational institutions in significant settlements. By 1886, by order of the Trustee of the Odesa Educational District, all persons who temporarily held teaching positions without proper qualifications were replaced in city schools.⁴⁰ Given the limited human resource potential, the process in villages took longer. Researchers agree that attempts to introduce Russian were premature.⁴¹

The teacher shortage in the western part of the Odesa Educational District was addressed by expanding the training network. In 1872, a teacher's seminary was opened in Bairamcha, Akkerman Uyezd⁴². At the same time, a decision was made to move a similar institution from Mykolaiv to Kherson, and two years later, to open an additional one in the town of Novyi Buh⁴³. Both had three scholarships for “students from the South Slavs”.

³⁸ *Vestnik Bessarabskogo zemstva*, 1881, no. 7–8, p. 11–13.

³⁹ Tatiana Chicaroș, *Rolul școlilor particulare din Basarabia în sistemul învățământului din Imperiul Rus în a doua jumătate a sec. al XIX-lea – începutul sec. al XX-lea* [The role of Bessarabian private schools in the educational system of the Russian Empire in the second half of the 19th – early 20th century], in “Tyragetia”, 2008, Vol. VI [XXI], no. 2 [Istorie. Muzeologie], p. 208.

⁴⁰ *Vestnik Bessarabskogo zemstva*, 1885, no. 12, p. 33–34.

⁴¹ Valentina Chirtoagă, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

⁴² *Sbornik postanovlenii po Ministerstvu narodnogo prosveshcheniya. 1871–1873*, Vol. 5, 1877, p. 597, 2193.

⁴³ *Sbornik Khersonskogo zemstva*, 1875, no. 12, p. 576–578.

In 1878, the teachers' seminaries of the Odesa Educational District were allowed to enrol "persons of Christian confession", not just Orthodox Christians. This decision was important for the children of former German colonists. However, until 1889, they were not awarded state scholarships.⁴⁴ Higher-level institutions (teacher training institutes) remained closed to Roman Catholics, and even more so to non-Christians. They were not allowed to enter seminaries either. Several other restrictions related to the undesirable admission to secondary schools of children of people engaged in "indecent professions". This could be the retailing of spirits or the running of houses of tolerance.⁴⁵ There were regular cases of students being expelled "forever" from gymnasiums for helping their parents with such work. It was almost impossible to enter another institution, as principals sent out relevant information to colleagues throughout the Russian Empire.⁴⁶

In the late 1870s and early 1880s, the imperial unification of educational administration and the elimination of national peculiarities in remote regions affected Bulgarian, German, and Jewish rural schools in the Odesa Educational District. They were no longer subordinated to the Ministry of State Property, but to the Ministry of Public Education. In the following years, similar decisions were approved in relation to Lutheran church schools (1890), schools attached to Roman Catholic (1892) and all other Catholic churches (1896), and Armenian (1897)⁴⁷.

The result was the creation of additional levers for Russification by reducing the influence of religious communities on personnel policy and the educational process. At the same time, the role of the Orthodox clergy was preserved/strengthened. At the beginning of 1881, there were 37 parochial schools (all in the Akkerman Uyezd) and two central rural schools (in Sarata and Comrat) in the former German and Bulgarian colonies of Bessarabia. Two more elementary schools were designated as Jewish schools (in Soroca and Chişinău). Only one institution was added to this list over the next five years. The German parish school was opened thanks to a donation from the parishioners of the Lutheran church in Akkerman (200 rubles annually).⁴⁸

⁴⁴ *Sbornik postanovlenii po Ministerstvu narodnogo prosveshcheniya. 1889–1890*, Vol. 11, 1895, p. 950–951.

⁴⁵ *Derzhavnyi arkhiv Odeskoi oblasti* [State Archive of Odesa Oblast], Fond 42, Opys. 35, Sprava 301, p. 26–30.

⁴⁶ *Derzhavnyi arkhiv Mykolaiivskoi oblasti*, Fond 131, Opys. 1, Sprava 26, p. 13–14.

⁴⁷ *Sbornik postanovlenii po Ministerstvu narodnogo prosveshcheniya. 1877–1881*, Vol. 7, 1883, p. 118; *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, 1892, p. 125–126; *Ibid.*, Vol. 15, 1902, pp. 2045, 2055–2057.

⁴⁸ *Vestnik Bessarabskogo zemstva*, 1885, no. 12, p. 3–6.

Over time, primary education institutions were characterised by officials as having “completely lost their original significance and serving tasks that are not suitable for life”. This approach led to their gradual reorganisation, transforming them into model schools under the Ministry of Public Education, real (in Komrat) or classical two-grade (in Sarata).⁴⁹

The 38 parochial schools in the former German colonies were also criticised. The Director of public schools in the Bessarabia Governorate, F. Solovyov, was concerned that their pupils lacked adequate knowledge of the Russian language. At the same time, it was thanks to these schools that Akkerman Uyezd led the region in both the number of students and their share of the total population. The accommodation in high-quality stone houses was noteworthy. This was rare among institutions of a similar level.⁵⁰

In the second half of the 1880s, the Directorate of public schools in the Bessarabia Governorate noted the significant success of urban school students in learning Russian. Similar results in villages were considered “unattainable”. The inspectors had to constantly draw attention to the “allogeneous origin of the majority of pupils” as the main obstacle to overcoming these difficulties. The worst situation was in one-class rural schools, where children did not know Russian at all upon admission. Because of this, along with parents' lack of interest, fewer than 5% of pupils completed the entire course of study each year.⁵¹ This picture aligned with regional trends. The graduation rate in cities was 6.1%. However, in large settlements, the failure rate was compounded by disapproving behaviour. Sixteen pupils, or more than 5% of the total number, were expelled from the third Odesa gymnasium in just one academic year (1892/93).⁵²

At the end of the 19th century, education continued to be used as an instrument of assimilation towards the inhabitants of annexed southern Bessarabia. “The process of denationalisation of the Bessarabian Moldovans through the church and school is gaining momentum,” Nicolae Ciachir rightly noted.⁵³ But the central government thought differently. In 1889, even Emperor Nicholas II drew attention to the slowdown in the Russification process. This issue was discussed at a meeting of the Committee of Ministers with the participation

⁴⁹ *Pamyatnaya knizhka Odesskago uchebnago okruga na 1913–1914 uchebnii god* [Commemorative book of Schools in Odessa District. Academic year 1913–1914], Odessa, Tipografiya Obshchestva “Russkaya Rech”, 1914, pp. 134, 423.

⁵⁰ *Vestnik Bessarabskogo zemstva*, 1885, no. 12, p. 87–89.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45–52.

⁵² *Derzhavnyi arkhiv Odeskoi oblasti*, Fond 42, Opys. 35, Sprava 334, p. 15

⁵³ Nicolae Ciachir, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

of the Temporary Governor-General of Odesa. He reported together with the Over-Procurator of the Holy Synod and the ministers of the Internal Affairs and National Education. The Governor-general noted that the opening of a sufficient number of parochial schools in Bessarabia was complicated by the inertia of the predominant Moldovan population, which “does not realise the need to learn Russian”. The local clergy also did not provide reliable support. Given the circumstances, officials proposed to continue teaching the “female element” at the theological school “gradually and without violence”. This was the way they planned to introduce Russian as a spoken language in families. This primarily concerned the families of the local rural clergy. At the same time, the Ministry of National Education reported on active work to open as many rural schools as possible. In the past decade alone, their number increased from 198 to 395. Another lever of influence was the appointment of “exclusively those persons who were fluent in Russian” to managerial positions in villages.⁵⁴

The Director of Public Schools in the Kherson Governorate, V. Farmakovsky, drew attention to similar problems in his 1888 report. “Measures are urgently needed to introduce Russian education in the area of German settlements,” the official stated. He was concerned that residents taught their children in German “in the German direction” and that no more than 4% of students received a Russian education. Nevertheless, it had to be stated that the local central schools were “luxuriously provided with their own untouched capital”, well-equipped and had decent teachers.⁵⁵

In the 1890s, the Ministry of National Education remained concerned about the same issues. The ministry's first attempts to address the problem of insufficient Russification were met with resistance from some members of the State Council. They feared the local population's discontent. The fears were well-founded regarding the communities of the Bessarabian colonists. Earlier, they had refused to take a formal initiative to reorganise their parochial schools into elementary schools (1881) and to allocate funding for Russian-language teachers (1885). Such behaviour was not new, as similar decisions were made by the German population of various Volosts in the 1820s and 1830s.⁵⁶

At the end of the 19th century, the Sarato-Vernerov Central School in Akkerman Uyezd came to practical resistance. After the introduction of teaching

⁵⁴ *Sbornik postanovlenii po Ministerstvu narodnogo prosveshcheniya. 1889–1890*, Vol. 11, 1895, p. 158–161.

⁵⁵ *Sbornik Khersonskogo zemstva*, 1889, no. 9, p. 10–11.

⁵⁶ Kateryna Liakh, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

all subjects in Russian in 1889, students (with their parents' support) filed a complaint with the District Trustee against a Russian teacher. This only slowed down such steps further for a few years. The department continued to receive regular reports of the low level of Russian-language instruction and even a complete lack of understanding in some regions (in particular, among almost half of the German colonists in the Odesa Uyezd).

Eventually, in 1897, the Minister received permission to introduce Russian-language instruction in schools for former foreign colonists. To avoid potential conflicts, exceptions were made for the study of "the Law of God" and the native language, as well as the retention of existing teaching staff.⁵⁷ It is worth agreeing with Tatiana Chicaroş's statement that this "policy of standardisation, centralised and bureaucratic management, and total Russification of the education had negative consequences and hindered the development of local national culture."⁵⁸

The expansion of the primary school network required proper supervision and control. These functions were entrusted primarily to the inspectors of public schools. Even if they did not record cases of political unreliability among students, the District Trustee periodically drew the administration's attention to the need for close monitoring.⁵⁹ Principals and the inspectorate developed rules of conduct for students outside the school, which included, for example, a ban on attending "any gatherings."⁶⁰ When it came to private educational institutions, the District authorities were concerned about the potential "unpleasant consequences" of their opening by incompetent persons.⁶¹

In the 1870s, there were four inspectors of public schools in both Governorates. In 1880, an additional position was introduced to supervise and control almost 100 schools in the annexed part of Bessarabia. The explanation was that the local population was unfamiliar with school requirements and could not set things right on their own. "Special managers" were needed to run the educational process and manage the institutions. Given the absence of zemstvos, nobility leaders, and school councils in the region, the inspector became "the sole organiser of educational affairs."⁶² Nevertheless, it wasn't easy to cope with the

⁵⁷ *Sbornik postanovlenii po Ministerstvu narodnogo prosveshcheniya. 1897–1898*, Vol. 15, 1902, p. 201–217.

⁵⁸ Tatiana Chicaroş. *Evoluția învățământului liceal din Basarabia...*, p. 282.

⁵⁹ *Derzhavnyi arkhiv Odeskoi oblasti* [State Archive of Odesa Oblast], Fond 42, Opys. 35, Sprava 334, pp. 1–2.

⁶⁰ *Derzhavnyi arkhiv Mykolaivskoi oblasti*, Fond 131, Opys. 1, Sprava 277, p. 12–13.

⁶¹ *Derzhavnyi arkhiv Odeskoi oblasti*, Fond 42, Opys. 35, Sprava 301, p. 22.

⁶² *Sbornik postanovlenii po Ministerstvu narodnogo prosveshcheniya. 1877–1881*, Vol. 7,

volume of work and to visit schools in remote villages. Rare visits helped preserve the community's influence.⁶³

In 1886, the five inspectors of the Bessarabia Governorate were joined by one more, exclusively for the Izmail Uyezd.⁶⁴ However, by the end of the 19th century, these officials were in short supply. In 1898, the relevant department authorised inspectors to engage local teachers in supervising Jewish elementary schools to offset staff shortages in the Odesa Educational District.⁶⁵ There were over 400 institutions of this type in the Bessarabia Governorate alone.

The role the central government assigned to inspectors in the region is evident in a ministerial submission. "On the outskirts of the empire and in general in areas with a multi-tribal population⁶⁶ government supervision of colleges and private schools, in the person of the inspector of public schools, should be much more vigilant and stricter than in the interior Governorates with an indigenous Russian population". The authorities feared a "desire for national separateness". "The spread of the state school with the dominance of the Russian language still meets with strong resistance in some areas," reads a document from early 1900. The Trustee of the Odesa Educational District, Kh. Solskyi, stated that the territory under his jurisdiction had such diversity, due to the "tribal composition of the population", that it was rare to find anywhere else. According to him, in the large number of "allogenuous schools" there, children often "have no idea about the Russian language" and communities are keen to preserve their identity. The most significant difficulties arose in the Chişinău, Bender, Soroca, and Khotyn Uyezd of Bessarabia. In 1900, in addition to 567 ministerial schools, there were 421 "allogenuous schools" throughout the Governorate. In the neighbouring Kherson Governorate, 813 of the former and 783 of the latter.⁶⁷ Eventually, the desire to offset negative local influences on education led to the creation of five additional inspector positions: three in Kherson Governorate (1900) and two in Bessarabia (1901).

1883, p. 1870–1872.

⁶³ Jakob Becker, *Bessarabien und sein Deutschtum*, Bietigheim/Württemberg, Edward Krug, 1966, p. 144.

⁶⁴ *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniya*, Vol. 246, 1886 (August), p. 30–31.

⁶⁵ *Sbornik rasporyazhenii po Ministerstvu narodnogo prosveshcheniya. 1898–1900*, Vol. 14, 1904, p. 239.

⁶⁶ Different ethnic groups are meant.

⁶⁷ *Sbornik postanovlenii po Ministerstvu narodnogo prosveshcheniya. 1900*, Vol. 17, 1904, pp. 977, 1005–1007.

CONCLUSIONS

In the second half of the 19th century, one of the main tasks for the leadership of the Odesa Educational District was to unify the system of management of educational institutions. Local officials, with the support of the Governor's office and the relevant Ministry, sought to achieve maximum uniformity in the school network and optimise financial expenditures from the state treasury. This course was more pronounced in Bessarabia, especially after the annexation of its southern part following the war with the Ottoman Empire in 1877–1878. Education here began to play the role of a “soft power” in the desire to “secure forever” the territory for the Russian Empire. It was in this aspect that the opening of new secondary schools and the renewal of the network of rural schools in the 1880s and 1890s were decided.

At the end of the 1870s, the leadership of the Odesa Educational District faced problems with the departure of Romanian teachers from the region, the lack of educational equipment, the need to repair premises, and the indifference of residents to the Russian education system. Control over the implementation of the decisions was ensured by increasing inspectoral supervision of students and teachers. In the late 1880s and early 1890s, the government's intentions to create a network of parochial schools using local funds or to switch to Russian in German and Bulgarian schools simultaneously faced rejection from the local population. Therefore, the strategy became a phased one, yielding noticeable results by the end of the 19th century but not solving material problems.

At the same time, it is necessary to recognise some positive effects: the growth in the number of educational institutions (primary and city schools, progymnasiums, gymnasiums, teacher seminaries) and, accordingly, the level of literacy and academic coverage. However, these processes took place within the framework of the imperial Russification policy without due regard for the interests of the local population (Moldovan, German, Bulgarian, Jewish, etc.) and various religious communities. The geographical location of the Bessarabia and Kherson Governorates made control over the younger generation not only a purely social issue, but also an important geopolitical one, especially against the background of interstate confrontation and the intensification of the revolutionary and Moldovan national movements in later years.

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