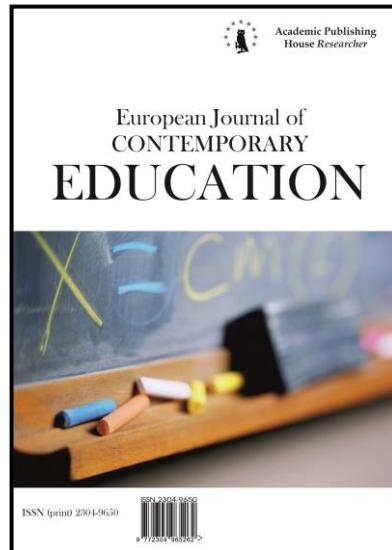




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Schools for Training Future Clerical Employees in the Russian Empire: Professional Staff and Characteristics of the Learning Process

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Abstract

As the bureaucratic apparatus burgeoned in the Russian Empire, an urgent need arose to provide it with professional personnel. The government made a series of attempts to address the issue since the early 19th century. One effort comprised the organization of clerical workforce schools. The institutions were expected to staff various levels of numerous government bodies with properly trained clerks.

In the paper, the authors adopted a comprehensive approach to highlight activities of schools for potential clerks. In particular, our study focused on the staff, financing policies in the educational institutions, functions performed by the management in the schools and supervisory bodies and learning process organization.

With a variety of research works and sources reviewed, the authors can conclude that, in the environment of the ever growing functional and structural complexity of the bureaucratic apparatus in the Russian Empire, schools for future clerks considerably drove the development of professional qualities required in employees of the state bureaucracy. It was these educational institutions that to a large extend helped set up a flow of junior professional clerks to government agencies and authorities.

Keywords: clerical employees, officials, Charter of schools for children of clerical employees, professional education, Russian Empire, 19th century.

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1. Introduction

The first half of the 19th century marked rapid progression of the bureaucratic apparatus in the Russian Empire. Its structure became more sophisticated as the bureaucratic machine evolved areas of subject matter expertise based on the functions performed. Government bodies rose dramatically in number and in variety, starting from the lowest departments up through to the highest authorities. Personnel for the bodies were in great demand at the time. It was often difficult to pick candidates for middle and top positions, but the government still managed to deal with the objective with relative success. Strengthening government bodies with “technical” personnel – junior officials that included clerical employees, scribes, copyists, archivists, filing clerks and others – was a far tougher challenge. Each authority needed a sufficiently large supply of such officials. However, the positions were not always easy to fill, even if there were those who wanted to occupy them, because applicants were expected to have good record keeping skills, be able to properly draw up various documents and have other competencies.

The relevance of the competencies was not that high almost over the entire 18th century. It was sufficient to be able to write, including in calligraphy. This also quenched the demand for some time after the administrative reforms in the last quarter of the 18th century. Technical aspects of matters controlled by specific government departments and increasingly elaborate bureaucratic functions sizably complicated the rules for drawing up and managing documents, and, as a result, proficiency requirements for officials holding clerical positions became tougher.

To provide numerous government bodies, authorities and agencies of various levels with properly trained clerical employees, the process of creating vocational educational institutions was initiated in the Russian Empire in the first half of the 19th century. The schools became a primary focus of this study.

2. Materials and methods

The paper's key source includes the legislative acts issued in the first half of the 19th century, which regulated the activity of the clerical schools under review. The documents were published in the second collection of the “Complete collection of laws of the Russian Empire” ([PSZ-2](#)). They were used to trace the evolution of the educational institutions and explore their operation, since the time they were established in 1828 to the middle of the 19th century.

The paper's methodological basis incorporates the principles of historicism and objectivity, which ensure an unbiased picture of events and phenomena of the past in their development and interrelation. We also used an anthropocentric perspective because our work had a close look at people that shared either a set of professional functions (teaching and management staff of the schools) or belonged to a specific socio-professional group (poor clerical employees and other officials, as well as their children). By employing the method of comparative analysis, we were able to identify common and distinguishing features in the way different educational institutions (clerical schools and uezd (district) schools) functioned in the period under review. The cliometric method enabled the work to leverage and analyze various quantitative data on the research topic.

The educational institutions under review were originally called Schools for Children of Clerical Employees. So, the name codified the category of individuals who were entitled to study at the schools. But over time, in addition to clerical employees, the government permitted other types of officials to send their children to the institutions. Nevertheless, the ultimate purpose of the schools was to train specialists who would have to take clerical positions in various government bodies and authorities. For this reason, our paper will use interchangeably terms “school for children of clerical employees”, “school for clerical employees” and “school for future clerical employees”.

3. Discussion

The history of education is a long established and one of the most popular areas of academic interest. A multitude of works examined the development of education in the Russian Empire in the 18th – early 20th century.

A number of scholars studied the education level of civil servants of the Russian Empire or educational institutions that provided training for future officials. The growth of the bureaucracy was closely intertwined with professionalization of bureaucratic personnel in the Russian Empire between the 18th and 19th centuries. The need for education was long linked with the opportunity to pursue a career in the public service. Hence, as researchers explored the operation of various

government or educational institutions of the period, they, one way or another, touched on the aspects related to the influence of the education system on the training of future or existing officials. In the range of these studies, we, above all, should point out the works by Russian and Ukrainian scholars, such as M. Vladimirskiy-Budanov ([Vladimirskiy-Budanov, 1874](#)), D. Tolstoy ([Tolstoy, 1883](#)), Ya. Barshev ([Barshev, 1876](#)), O. Pivovarov ([Pivovarov, 2001](#)), O. Yehorova ([Yehorova, 2004](#)), V. Masliichuk ([Masliichuk, 2009](#)), Yu. Disson ([Disson, 2008](#)), N. Zakaluzhna ([Zakaluzhna, 2009](#)) and V. Slotin ([Slotin, 2010](#)). A number of researchers put the problem in the center of their studies ([Bezrodnyiy, 1903](#); [Degtyarev, 2011](#); [Flynn, 1968](#)). In one of our works, we analyzed a package of measures that the government of the Russian Empire initiated to set up the process of professional training for officials by opening appropriate educational institutions and providing a legal framework for the process regulation ([Degtyarev, 2012](#)). Later, we also concentrated on such topics as the role of education in the professional capabilities of civil officers and employees of the department of public education as a constituent part of the bureaucratic apparatus ([Degtyarev, 2014: 102-190](#)).

The research area is generally reviewed in a wide range of studies. Proceeding from this, a number of scholars even sought to systematize them in individual historiographic works ([Lebid et al., 2020a](#); [Lebid et al., 2020b](#)).

Despite the attention to the subject, no dedicated studies have been aimed so far to supply an in-depth analysis of schools for future clerical employees, which were first launched in the Russian Empire in 1827-1828.

4. Results

On November 1 and 2, 1825, the cities of Yaroslavl and Poltava, respectively, arranged specialized departments to train clerical employees, namely scribes. Each of the departments received 50 students sent from the Poltava and Yaroslavl social welfare boards (*prikaz obshchestvennogo prizreniya*). The opening of these educational institutions was patronized by the military governor of Little Russian and civil governor of Yaroslavl. They later reported to the Minister of Internal Affairs (the title was held by V.S. Lanskoy at that time) that the institutions had already been properly equipped and were on and running. However, the Senate issued a corresponding edict based on the report only in May 1826, entitled “On opening Departments for students from Social Welfare Boards in the cities of Yaroslavl and Poltava to prepare scribes” ([PSZ-2. T.I. №346: 466](#)). In fact, these were the first attempts to institute professional training of civil servants at the government level.

October 14, 1827, almost two years later, saw His Imperial Majesty’s Edict “On the clerical employees of the civil affairs department” issued ([PSZ-2. T.II. №1469: 895-897](#)). It was an essential legislative act that regulated various matters related to the category of employees. It institutionally recognized the need for professional training of applicants for clerical positions. The government realized that the positions would not look very attractive for the most of the nobility. Hence, the edict instructed the Senate to develop a plan to establish schools that would “educate the children of impecunious clerical employees in line with their destiny”. When beginning their clerical service, applicants were required to “prove that not only can they read and write correctly, but know the fundamentals of grammar and arithmetic” ([PSZ-2. T.II. №1469: 895, 896](#)).

The edict, dated October 14, 1827, also demonstrates an aspiration by the government to make provisions to able to support schools in training clerical employees. All clerical officials on active duty were entitled to the so-called army ration. Moreover, officials working in provincial bodies and authorities, were also allocated cloth to have uniforms sewn. The same edict stipulated to convert surplus food and cloth, if any, into the support for the schools. The equivalent of the surplus stock price was transferred as sums of money to the social welfare boards in the governorates where the schools were to be launched ([PSZ-2. T.II. №1469: 897](#)).

Less than a year later (February 16, 1828), the emperor approved the “Charter of schools for children of clerical employees”. The document completed the legal implementation of schools for children of clerical employees as a new type of educational institution.

These institutions were accountable to the main department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, but the primary oversight over the learning process was a responsibility of the Ministry of Public Education. The schools had three grades, but the academic program lasted six years (two years in each grade).

Mention has already been made above that the state was in critical need for properly trained officials, including clerical employees, at the time. But the Charter clearly shows the effort of the document compiler to shape, in the first place, a positive image of the government that demonstrates paternal care for its subjects and only then advances state interests. The Charter of February 16, 1828, even accordingly formulated the goals of creating schools for children of clerks:

1. "Grant aid to indigent (poor) board clerical employees or their families in raising children".
 2. "Provide these children with decent upbringing".
 3. "Educate (train) individuals capable of holding clerical and general civil service positions"
- (PSZ-2. T.III. №1814: 158).

At the local level, clerical schools were supposed to be run by and receive financing from social welfare boards.

At the time when the Charter of schools for clerical employees was approved, an educational institution of the type already functioned in the Ryazan governorate. The plan aimed to start 10 more such schools in different cities across the empire, such as Arkhangelsk, Astrakhan, Voronezh, Kishinev, Nizhny Novgorod, Oryol, Perm, Pskov, Kherson and Yaroslavl. The schools were meant to train personnel for clerical positions in 20 governorates and 2 oblasts of the Russian Empire.

From this point forward, schools for future clerks started emerging in other cities of the empire. As early as on February 18, 1828, a decision was made to establish such schools in St. Petersburg, Moscow, in the summer of 1830, a school was opened in Smolensk, and more (PSZ-2. T.III. №1817: 174; Shperk, 1899: 54).

As soon as the foundation process for the clerical schools began, the issue of providing the educational institutions with premises was top of the agenda. The task of devising a solution was given to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It was recommended to use buildings owned by social welfare boards or other unused public facilities (PSZ-2. T.III. №1814: 159). Construction of new buildings was coordinated if authorities could not find premises for a school.

The Charter of schools for children of clerical employees was supplemented with a special schedule (*rospis*) that detailed the number of students the schools could enroll, the teaching and administrative staff, calculations of the funds required to maintain schools, their employees and students, etc. (PSZ-2. T.III. №1814: Prilozheniya: 64-77). Even quotas were introduced for each governorate and oblast on the number of children they could send to the institutions to take up studies (see Table 1).

Table 1. Schools training clerical employees and number of students permitted in them as per the Charter of February 16, 1828

Clerical employee training schools	Permitted number of students	Governorates and oblasts which were authorized to send children to the schools (number of students)
Arkhangelsk school	25	Arkhangelsk G. (15) Olonets G. (10)
Astrakhan school	40	Astrakhan G. (20) Caucasus O. (20)
Voronezh school	60	Voronezh G. (10) Saratov G. (10) Sloboda Ukraine G. (10) Tambov G. (30)
Kishinev school	20	Bessarabia O. (20)
Nizhny Novgorod school	60	Nizhny Novgorod G. (15) Penza G. (20) Simbirsk G. (10) Kazan G. (15)
Oryol school	60	Oryol G. (20) Kaluga G. (10) Tula G. (10) Kursk G. (10)

		Mogilev G. (10)
Perm school	45	Perm G. (15) Vyatka G. (15) Orenburg G. (15)
Pskov school	60	Pskov G. (15) Novgorod G. (15) Smolensk G. (10) Tver G. (10) Vitebsk G. (10)
Kherson school	50	Kherson G. (18) Ekaterinoslav G. (18) Taurida G. (14)
Yaroslavl school	50	Yaroslavl G. (14) Vologda G. (12) Kostroma G. (12) Vladimir G. (12)

Overall, the 10 schools were allowed to have only 470 students, and the number was obviously insufficient and far from the desired figure to saturate the bureaucratic apparatus of the Russian Empire with clerical officials. But, we have already pointed out that similar educational institutions continued to open in other cities throughout the country in this and subsequent periods.

Note should also be taken of the fact that the entire spending for all educational and daily living needs of each student without exception was provided by the social welfare boards and through government subsidies (see [Table 2](#)).

Table 2. Number of students maintained through funding from Social Welfare Boards or government subsidies as per the Charter of February 16, 1828

Clerical employee training schools	Total number of students	Students paid for by social welfare boards	Students paid for through government subsidies
Arkhangelsk school	25	0	25
Astrakhan school	40	18	22
Voronezh school	60	40	20
Kishinev school	20	20	0
Nizhny Novgorod school	60	42	18
Oryol school	60	40	20
Perm school	45	22	23
Pskov school	60	24	36
Kherson school	50	30	20
Yaroslavl school	50	27	23

A school's funding was also determined depending on how many students the facility was designed to have. For example, schools with a capacity for 30 students were funded at the rate of 350 rubles per student. Larger schools were financed at the rate of 300 rubles per student. The money allocated not only covered student maintenance, but also the salaries of school employees and running costs, including firewood for heating, candles for lighting, books, dishes, clothing for students, food and others. So, average spending for one school, based on its size, could vary from 9 to 16.5 thousand rubles per year. In the first year of operation, each institution additionally received 150 rubles for each student from the government.

Similarly, the staff of the schools for future clerical officials was estimated. For example, a school, intended for 30 students, was supposed to employ one supervisor (smotritel) and an

assistant supervisor, paid 600 and 300 rubles per year, respectively. It should have four teachers on the staff in disciplines: 1) Law of God and Sacred History; 2) reading, spelling and grammar; 3) history and geography; 4) mathematics and drafting. Their salaries were subsidized in the amount of 2 thousand rubles per year ([PSZ-2. T.III. №1814: Prilozheniya: 64](#)). In addition, the schools separately hired a scribe to handle paperwork, as well as three servants – a cook and two laundresses. Staff schedules in schools, which fitted more than 30 students, differed insignificantly. The supervisor had two assistants. The number of teachers here was the same as in the schools for 30 students, and the same 2 thousand rubles were annually allocated for their salaries. The service personnel were slightly more extensive and included six servants, two cooks and three laundresses ([PSZ-2. T.III. №1814: Prilozheniya: 70](#)).

Instruction in clerical schools was supposed to be delivered by teachers from local gymnasiums and uezd schools. As for training in rules and procedures for handling documents or judicial practice, schools could invite retired or practicing officials.

School day-to-day operation was directly managed by supervisors. The general oversight of the institutions, however, was a responsibility of Boards of Trustees, formed specifically for the purpose. These boards were headed by civil governors and included provincial aristocracy leaders, governorate school directors and one member from the Social Welfare Boards. In some cases, other officials could be appointed to the Board of Trustees, if requested by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

A Board of Trustees typically convened once a month. Meetings could be carried more often, as required. The Board watched over that the school ran its housekeeping processes in an orderly manner, monitored student performance, and made decisions to allocate funds as needed to maintain the school. A supervisor, his assistants, and teaching staff were hired or fired on the Board's discretion. The Board also decided on the admission or expulsion of students for academic failure or inappropriate behavior. In addition, the Boards of Trustees acted as an intermediary between clerical schools and the Ministry of Public Education in issues related to the educational process, which were not regulated by law.

A supervisor of a clerical school was obliged to comply with all the orders of the Board of Trustees. A supervisor's principal functions ranged from overseeing students' behavior and the school's housekeeping activities to ensuring that other school employees performed their duties as intended. He reported on all the matters directly to the chairman of the Board of Trustees ([PSZ-2. T.III. №1814: 161](#)).

As for student eligibility for enrollment, schools for children of clerical employees, unlike other schools, had their own peculiar process. Admission was only granted to children of poor clerical employees of state bodies at the governorate or uezd level, provided that their parents did not belong to a taxed estate. In addition, children should be vaccinated against smallpox or have immunity to it (had been exposed to the virus in the past) and have no chronic or contagious diseases, as well as suffer no physical and mental deviations that "could interfere with duties in the position" ([PSZ-2. T.III. №1814: 162](#)).

In October 1828, the Minister of Internal Affairs submitted a request to the Committee of Ministers to allow schools for children of clerical employees to "give custody to the children of estate representatives and secretaries in uezd courts and lower zemstvo courts in governorates where there was no nobility". The Committee rejected the request. The schools were specifically established for the children of indigent (poor) clerical employees and admitting children of other (often much more prosperous) officials there could bring about the need for major changes in the "Charter of schools for children of clerical employees" ([PSZ-2. T.III. №2416: 986](#)).

Nevertheless, one year had not passed when the problem was resolved. In September 1829, schools for clerical children were permitted to admit boarders ([PSZ-2. T.IV. №3131: 634-635](#)). The status of a boarder could receive a child of any official or noble. At the same time, the children were not regarded as students prescribed for such schools by the mandatory staff plan – they were, as it were, supernumerary students. The rule did not allow them to qualify for a portion of the state funding allocated to the educational institution. The tuition fee for boarders was equal to the sum of the state support for full-time students. Upon admission, parents of boarders made a one-time contribution of 150 rubles and paid 300–350 rubles annually. This was the sum that the

government spent to maintain one student, who came from a poor family of a clerical employee. Like regular students, boarders were required to submit medical documents to the school.

In 1834, the government added new categories of individuals eligible to go to schools for future clerical employees at public expense. By this time, the bureaucratic apparatus of the Russian Empire further yet more swelled. The number of grade rank officials (individuals that served their ranks according to the Table of Ranks) grew significantly, and was, among other things, swelled by poor members of non-aristocratic estates. Many of them had too small salaries and few other material resources to adequately keep their families. These officials, provided that their rank was not higher than grade IX (titular councilor) according to the Table of Ranks, had the opportunity to send their children to clerical schools as public charges. A note should be made, however, that the children of grade rank officials could only be admitted if there was “not enough children of prikaz clerks to complete school enrollment” ([PSZ-2. T.IX. №7521: 121-122](#)). It meant the children of low-income clerical employees still retained the formal right of the first priority when entering the institutions.

In 1845, the State Council approved a resolution that permitted establishing schools for children of clerical employees not only in central governorate cities, but wherever there was a need for the type of training facility and financial resources for the opening. The training departments for clerical employees, mentioned at the beginning of our work, that operated in social welfare boards in Yaroslavl and Poltava, were reorganized into schools for children of clerical employees in 1845 ([PSZ-2. T.XX. №19558: 244-245](#)). Moreover, all such schools could now increase enrollment up to 100 students. From that time on, the institutions were also opened for children of officials with ranks above grade VII according to the Table of Ranks (court councilor) ([PSZ-2. T.XX. №19558: 244](#)).

At the time of opening, the schools simultaneously enrolled students to two grades. The recommendation was to admit students aged from 10 to 12 (first grade) and from 12 to 14 (second grade) in equal shares. Subsequent enrollments admitted only children of 10-12 years old. The children, who were admitted to the second grade immediately, were required to have reading and writing skills. In 1836, the Committee of Ministers passed a resolution that allowed schools for future clerks to admit students beginning from the age of 9. In this case, preference was to be given to children who were orphans or whose parents were in extreme financial distress ([PSZ-2. T. XI. №9522: 27](#)).

The admission to the school followed a specific procedure. An applicant, which aspired to master the clerical profession, submitted a respective written request (application) to the school through the uezd marshal of the nobility or a uezd judge. A certificate of employment of the child's father, as well as a certificate of the difficult financial situation of their family were attached to the application. When considering candidates, priority was given to the children whose fathers had a longer and more impeccable record of service, to orphans, children from large families and children from other schools who had positive references from there.

The curriculum in schools for future clerical officials was similar to that of uezd schools in many respects. For example, the educational institutions taught the following disciplines:

- reading and penmanship;
- Law of God and Sacred History;
- Russian grammar;
- world and Russian history, geography of the world and the Russian state with the fundamentals of mathematical geography;
- arithmetic, basics of algebra, accounting and fundamentals of geometry with elements of trigonometry and geodesy;
- forms of proceedings and judicial procedures with practical exercises.

All the above disciplines were delivered in schools for clerks in the same volume and using the same tutorials as was the case in uezd schools ([PSZ-2. T.III. №1814: 164](#)).

Instructional times were strictly regimented. First-grade students had 4.5 classroom hours and 3 hours to prepare their lessons per day. In the second and third grades, lessons lasted 6 hours, and 3.5 hours were specified daily to do home assignment ([PSZ-2. T.III. №1814: Prilozheniya: 76](#)). The entire list of subjects delivered in schools for children of clerical employees and their weekly volumes in hours are shown in [Tables 3, 4 and 5](#).

Table 3. Subjects and hours allocated for them per week for first-grade students in schools for children of clerical employees

Grade	Year of study	Subjects	Hours per week
I	1	Reading	9
		Writing	9
		Arithmetic	6
	2	Reading	9
		Writing	6
		Catechism	3
		Arithmetic	6

Table 4. Subjects and hours allocated for them per week for second-grade students in schools for children of clerical employees

Grade	Year of study	Subjects	Hours per week
II	3	Reading training	4
		Penmanship	4
		Dictating and copying	4
		Sacred history	2
		World (ancient) history	4
		Ancient geography	2
		Arithmetic	4
		Grammar	4
		Essay writing	4
		Selected reading	4
II	4	Penmanship	4
		Dictating and copying	4
		Sacred history	2
		World (medieval) history	4
		Ancient geography	2
		Algebra	4
		Grammar	4
		Essay writing	4

Table 5. Subjects and hours allocated for them per week for third-grade students in schools for children of clerical employees

Grade	Year of study	Subjects	Hours per week
III	5	Manuscript reading	2
		Making fair copies of documents	4
		Longer Catechism	2
		World (contemporary) history	4
		Russian history	4
		World geography	4
		Accounting	4
		Training on making extracts and other documents	4
		Demonstration of types of clerical work	4
		Manuscript reading	2
III	6	Making fair copies of documents	4

	Explanation of church decrees	2
	World (contemporary) history	4
	Russian history	4
	Geography of Russia	4
	Geometry and drawing	4
	Training on making extracts and other documents	4
	Demonstration of types of clerical work	4

The tables above show that first graders were instructed in reading, writing and counting (see [Table 3](#)). And subjects that broadened their general knowledge and gave them practical skills required for their potential occupation was only taught starting from the third year of study. For future clerical officials, such practice-oriented subjects, of course, included penmanship, copying documents, reading manuscripts, training in making extracts, study of clerical work (see [Tables 4 and 5](#)).

The profession of a clerk in the first half of the 19th century directly involved work with handwritten documents. Many of them were difficult to read, which, in the first place, was brought about by such nuances as hand writing styles of their authors or scribes, time of document execution and their physical condition, i.e. how they were preserved. Therefore, schools for future clerks prepared students for such challenges. For example, the last year of study (third grade) introduced a subject "Manuscript reading". The «Gradual academic program for children of clerical employees» formulated the following purpose of the subject: "Reading manuscripts made in various handwriting styles" ([PSZ-2. T.III. №1814: Prilozheniya: 75](#)). This shows that students received hands-on training and were specifically drilled to deal with various difficulties they might encounter when reading handwritten texts.

Learning process organization and teaching methods were also built using the so-called Lancasterian System, named after an English educator, Joseph Lancaster. It is also known as the Bell-Lancaster method because another English educator Andrew Bell developed the same teaching methodology independently of J. Lancaster ([Brokgauz i Efron, 1992: 45](#)). The system gained widespread popularity in the early 19th century in many countries, and the Russian Empire adopted it in 1819 (although the system never came into common use). According to the system, older and more trained students (monitors) became helpers to the teacher who provided guidance as monitors conducted classes with younger students. The methodology made education more inclusive covering larger classes at a time.

In 1822, the Lancasterian instruction method was introduced in parish schools in the Russian Empire, but was only applied to the subjects such as reading, writing and basics of arithmetic ([Orlov, 2013: 12; Zacek, 1967](#)). Schools for children of clerical employees, were likely to use the Lancasterian teaching system for the same set of disciplines delivered in the first grade.

The director of educational institutions for the governorate, where a school for children of clerical employees was located, tracked good quality of teaching in the facility and students' diligence in their schoolwork. To this end, he could appear at any moment at the school without a word of prior notification and check the knowledge of students in any subject, as well as personally review teaching methods there. This audit was called an "individual test". In addition, a "general test" was held every year. It was an annual examination for all students, which was attended by the Board of Trustees, parents and everyone interested ([PSZ-2. T.III. №1814: 165](#)).

The brightest examinees could expect to have a more promising future. If they showed particularly outstanding performance at the exam at the end of the second grade, they received a privilege to additionally study Latin and German at local gymnasiums, as were transferred to the third grade. The students again took an exam in two years, when they finished the third grade. If they demonstrated the highest possible results this time as well, they were granted the right to apply to specialized departments at the Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kazan or Kharkov gymnasiums. They were admitted straight to the third grade and took a training course specified for provincial gymnasiums. Over the last two years of study, they also attended lectures on Russian jurisprudence at one of the universities (in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kazan or Kharkov). However, the honor was

bestowed only on the fortunate few. Schools for future clerks were allowed to select no more than one student out of 20 examinees for gymnasiums. Some of them could gain the right to apply to the university after completing the gymnasium curriculum. In the long term, this opened a door to the civil state service in higher and more prestigious positions than clerical ones ([PSZ-2. T.III. №1814: 166-167](#)).

Graduates of schools for children of clerical employees were offered regular or supernumerary clerical positions of the lowest rank in governorate or uezd public offices. Those who further succeeded in finishing the gymnasium program, but failed to enter the university, could apply for clerical positions of a higher category. If a governorate had not enough vacancies for clerical positions, applicants could then be sent to work in other regions of the empire.

Young people who graduated from schools for future clerks were required to work in a civil authority for at least 8 years. Those, who in addition completed the gymnasium program, had to serve for at least 6 years ([PSZ-2. T.III. №1814: 168](#)). Boarding students were in a more advantageous position in this regard. Those who completed the full academic program at a school for future clerks were required to do a civil service only for 4 years. And the term of service for those who graduated from a gymnasium was even smaller – just 3 years ([PSZ-2. T.IV. №3131: 634](#)).

Moreover, the government took some steps to keep updated the professional skills acquired by clerical employees during their training in the schools. Senior government officials held an opinion that young clerks “could easily lapse into indolence, giving up any attempts to continue their education or, worse, forgetting what they learned in schools” ([PSZ-2. T.XI. №9529: 30](#)). As a result, on September 18, 1836, an imperial edict was issued, which made it mandatory for graduates of schools for children of clerical employees to take exams in all subjects they studied at the school over the first three years of their work in clerical positions. Young officials had to take a test of knowledge directly in schools for future clerks, or in provincial gymnasiums, uezd schools, and even right at the place of their employment.

The very first examinations brought back poor results. Government officials came up with a potential reason for the situation. They believed the knowledge acquired quickly degraded because young clerical employees had no handbooks and tutorials they could leverage to preserve their knowledge. The government's special edict, dated December 21, 1837, ordered that young graduates from schools for future clerks, who joined the civil service, should be provided, at the schools' expense, with handbooks and tutorials on all subjects studied. In addition, they were allowed to attend school and public libraries ([PSZ-2. T.XII. №10824: 1025-1026](#)). Apparently, by taking the decision, the Committee of Ministers thought the measures were sufficient to maintain the required level of knowledge and ensure further professional development of young clerical employees.

If, even with such opportunities to enhance their knowledge, clerks failed to perform well enough at examinations, their management might impose penalties on them. They could be deprived of any incentives and be denied the right to promotion. The terms of such punishments were also determined at the discretion of the employee's immediate superiors ([PSZ-2. T.XII. №10824: 1026](#)).

5. Conclusion

Generally speaking, we should note that emerging schools, which trained future clerical employees, produced a beneficial effect in the Russian Empire. This was one of the government's few activities in the first half of the 19th century, which truly aimed to improve professional competencies of employees in the state bureaucratic apparatus. The period witnessed a rather extensive network of educational institutions – parish and uezd schools, gymnasiums, lycées and universities – being created in the country. However, the key goals of the education system were to bring up citizens committed to the monarchy and advance the general intellectual enrichment of students. As a rule, this was not sufficient to efficiently carry out narrowly specialized professional functions in various lines of the state civil service. On the other hand, the bureaucratic machine of the Russian Empire rapidly grew, and its structure and functions became increasingly elaborate. In these circumstances, the idea of establishing schools to train future clerical employees and its implementation became one of the most forward-looking and transformative steps by the government. These educational institutions to a large extend helped set up a flow of junior professional clerks to various public agencies and authorities.

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