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Igor Fedyukin

**EDUCATION
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BEYOND THE
“PETRINE REVOLUTION”**

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*Igor Fedyukin**

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Education in early modern Russia has been traditionally described as imported from the West; secular; imposed by the state – or more specifically, by Peter I himself – from above on the unwilling population; driven by the military needs, and therefore, technical. This chapter seeks to examine and to problematize some of these theses. Some of them have already been re-assessed by scholars, especially insofar as the role of the church in providing education is concerned. In other cases, the discussion is limited to identifying the gaps in our current understanding and pointing to ways of addressing them. In particular, on the basis of the author's own research as well as that of other scholars, it seeks to outline the responses of the tsar's subjects to the educational change; problematize the role of the “state” as an actor in this process, and that of Peter I himself; to understand what exactly is meant by the practical/military drivers of educational change and how exactly the role of these drivers could be ascertained; to emphasize the role of non-state, traditional, and informal genres and providers of education in that period. The last two sections seek to place the early modern education in Russia in the Western European context by identifying more precisely what exactly has been borrowed and how this “borrowing,” in fact, resulted in innovative reconfiguring of educational forms; and to discuss the role of early modern Russia as a pioneer, in some sense, of explicitly using education as a tool of social engineering.

Keywords: Education; early modern Russia; Peter I; projectors; nobility; church

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* National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE), Moscow, Russia. E-mail: ifedyukin@hse.ru.

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A few decades ago, an overview of the history of education in early modern Russia would have centered very much on Peter I and his efforts to educate his subjects. Indeed, for all practical purposes, such an overview would have very likely begun with Peter I. We would have read that it was Peter who personally designed and crafted the new secular, technical, modern schools out of nothing. He did so, we would have been told, very much against the wishes of all but the very few of his subjects, the vast majority of whom continued to resent and resist the sovereign's efforts to enlighten them for years, if not decades. The reasons for launching this campaign of forced enlightenment had to do with the defense of the realm: Peter, naturally, needed schools to train officers, navigators, engineers, and other specialists for the new navy and regular army he was creating. To address these needs, Peter resorted to wholesale borrowing of educational forms from Western Europe. So, if Russia did have any early modern educational tradition, this would be first and foremost the tradition of state-sponsored and state-enforced imposition of foreign educational models from above.¹

In many ways, this reading of “Petrine revolution” in education presents a paradigmatic model of “Westernizing” reforms in the extra-European world in general, as it portrays the pre-reform educational tradition as moribund and focused on religious dogma and therefore hopelessly unfit for the tasks of military and administrative modernization that are so crucial for national survival. In that sense, the “Petrine revolution” model might also appear to chart the road for subsequent “Westernizing” educational reforms in a variety of other countries, from Egypt and the Ottoman Empire to Meiji Japan and China of the “self-strengthening” era.²

In the past few decades, though, all the elements of this Petrine paradigm began to be dismantled, or at least questioned by scholars of Russian history. In some cases, new works appeared based on extensive archival research that offer comprehensive and compelling new readings of one or another episode in the history of early modern Russian education; in others, while we are still at an early stage of revising the Peter-centered narrative, the directions for such revisions are already clear. This chapter considers the ways in which

¹ The standard accounts in English are still James C. McClelland, *Autocrats and Academics: Education, Culture, and Society in Tsarist Russia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); Joseph L. Black, *Citizens for the Fatherland: Education, Educators, and Pedagogical Ideals in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (New York: East European Quarterly, 1979). The more recent work by Patrick L. Alston, *Education and the State in Tsarist Russia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), focuses mostly on the nineteenth century. By far the best overview of the earlier period (in Russian) is E. D. Dneprov, ed., *Ocherki istorii shkoly i pedagogicheskoi mysli narodov SSSR s drevneishikh vremen do kontsa XVII veka* (Moscow: Pedagogika, 1989), although, regrettably, it does not cover the eighteenth century. Alas, the relevant volume in that series, M.F. Shabaeva, ed., *Ocherki istorii shkoly i pedagogicheskoi mysli narodov SSSR: XVII vek – pervaya polovina XIX veka* (Moscow: Pedagogika, 1973), is much less helpful.

² For an overview, see David Ralston, *Importing the European Army: The Introduction of European Military Techniques and Institutions into the Extra-European World, 1600–1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

historians have been approaching the key elements of the Petrine narrative, which we might call, respectively, the “clean slate” myth; “Peter the demiurge” myth; the “resistance to schooling” myth; the “military needs” myth; and the “wholesale borrowing” myth. As we will see, taken together the efforts to revisit and revise these myths add up to a picture of the early modern educational tradition in Russia which is much less ruler-centered and state-driven than it has often been assumed. Instead, the emerging new narrative stresses the diversity of actors who stood behind educational change and the diversity of their agendas, in addition to offering a more nuanced model of cultural transfers in education that emphasizes the selectivity of borrowing and the efforts of the Russian actors to adapt and reconfigure foreign models according to their needs.

The “Clean Slate” Myth

Attempts to overcome the vision of pre-Petrine Russia as a clean slate in terms of education have a long history that goes back as far as the eighteenth century. At the core of such attempts was, obviously, the desire to counter the offensive vision of Muscovy as barbarous and ignorant and to offer a narrative where Peter’s innovations, important as they might be, were but only one stage in the evolution of an essentially native educational tradition. The central issue that emerged in this strain of literature was the question of when exactly “schools” actually emerged in Muscovy. The most optimistic, or uncritical, perhaps, readings of the sources strove to stretch the history of schooling as far back as the medieval period, even to the early decades of Christianity in Russia, and certainly to the 1630s–1640s. They also labored to multiply the number of pre-Petrine schools known to us, a feat sometimes achieved by interpreting every reference, however vague, to “teaching” or “learning” as evidence of the existence of a “school.” This line of argument inspired much valuable archival research that greatly enhanced our understanding of early modern educational realities in empirical terms but was not always sustainable conceptually. Since a great deal of this literature was motivated by openly political considerations, the resulting attempts to read the existence of early “schools” into the sources were in some cases so tenuous as to undermine the credibility of the entire enterprise and provoke opponents into arguing that there was no “schooling” in pre-Petrine Russia at all. This latter claim appeared to be equally hard to square with the abundant evidence of learning in Muscovy.

A promising way out of this conundrum is to accept that learning and teaching did not necessarily have to take place in “schools,” if by schools we mean institutionalized venues that have a clearly defined curriculum and other attributes of a modern educational

establishment. Such schools were indeed absent in Moscow (although not in the tsar's realm broadly conceived) before the founding of the so-called "Slavo-Greek-Latin Academy" in 1685. Rather, instruction took place in the form of apprenticeships, or perhaps, tutorship, where a "master" would teach a group of followers gathering around him in the same way as a master artisan teaches his apprentices.³ Such learning and teaching was becoming much more widespread in the seventeenth century and covered an ever wider range of subjects. It is in such a way, for example, that the translators and proofreaders, the apothecaries and the government clerks were trained at the government bureaus (*prikazy*).⁴ The authorities did not attempt, nor were they able to, define and regulate the methods and the content of such instruction: a master hired to perform a certain task would also be routinely expected to train few apprentices and to teach them, as the standard formula put it, "what he himself knows." It is because of the informality of such arrangements that they are so poorly reflected in the official records. This approach shifts attention from the ultimately sterile attempt to establish the precise date when the "first" school was established in Russia to studying the actual practices of teaching and learning; it also opens the door to understanding them on terms that would have been comprehensible to the contemporaries themselves.

Another important trend in terms of rediscovering the pre-Petrine educational tradition is the acknowledgment of the role played by the Ukrainian colleges, and especially by the most prominent among them, the Kiev Mohyla Academy, in the history of early modern Russian education after the incorporation of the Left Bank Ukraine into the Muscovite realm in the second half of the seventeenth century. While the existence of these colleges was never a secret, they were not really included in the grand narrative of Russian education—both for nationalistic reasons and because they were viewed as associated with the church (which they were), focused on training future clerics (which is true only to some extent), and therefore irrelevant for the history of modern education (which is patently wrong). So, in the past, scholars would sometimes acknowledge the existence of these schools only to dismiss them and to claim that "the final results [of the seventeenth-century attempts to implant education in Russia] were meager: at the time of Peter's accession Russia had no effective modern institutions of education."⁵ And while their Moscow "cousin," the Slavo-Greek-Latin

³ O. E. Kosheleva, "Education as a Problem in Seventeenth-Century Russia," in Paul Bushkovitch, ed., *The State in Early Modern Russia: New Directions* (Bloomington: Slavica Publishers, forthcoming); Kosheleva, "Obuchenie v russkoi srednevekovoi pravoslavnoi traditsii," in *Odissei. Chelovek v istorii*. 2010/2011 (Moscow: Nauka, 2012), 47–72.

⁴ N. F. Demidova, "Prikaznye shkoly nachal'nogo obrazovannia v Mosckve XVII v.," in L.A. Timoshina, ed., *Torgovlia i predprinimatel'stvo v feodal'noi Rossii: K iubileiu professora russkoi istorii Niny Borisovny Golikovoi* (Moscow: Arkheograficheskii tsentr, 1994), 152–67.

⁵ Marc Raeff, *Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia: The Eighteenth-Century Nobility* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970), 130.

Academy, might have been mentioned in passing as “the sole source of civic training” in Russia on the eve of Peter’s reign, allegedly “its circumscribed spirit precluded it from introducing secular learning.”⁶ Indeed, the traditional narrative centered nearly exclusively on such “modern,” secular endeavors as the Academy of Sciences (1725) or Peter’s technically oriented Moscow Navigation School (1701) or Naval Academy (1715).

Today, this narrative looks hopelessly misguided and anachronistic. These colleges not only trained the future clerics but also broad strata of the Ukrainian elites, and their graduates played an extremely important role in church and state administration not only in Ukraine but also throughout the empire. Indeed, in the first half of the eighteenth century their graduates (and their Russian pupils) achieved an overwhelming dominance in the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church: it is with their hands that Peter conducted his famous church reform. Furthermore, excellent new studies demonstrate, or rather remind us, how closely the Ukrainian institutions, even though run by the Orthodox clerics, were modeled after contemporary Jesuit colleges,⁷ as was the Slavo-Greek-Latin Academy.⁸ In that sense, these institutions were fully “modern” for their day in terms of the content and forms of instruction. The problem, of course, was that the definition of “modernity” in education was rapidly shifting. As Max Okenfuss points out, the Russians were dealing here with a “moving target”: while the Latin humanities, so central for these colleges, defined the outlook of education in Western Europe in the seventeenth century, in the eighteenth century they were no longer perceived as “modern,” even though in practice they still dominated the educational landscape.⁹

⁶ Alston, *Education and the State*, 4.

⁷ Most importantly, see L. Iu. Posokhova, *Na perekhrestii kul'tur, tradytsii, epokh: Pravoslavni kolehiiumy Ukraïny naprykintsi XVII-na pochatku XIX st.* (Kharkiv: Kharkivskiy national'nyi universytet imeni V.N. Karazina, 2011). The scholar most responsible, perhaps, for rediscovering the role of Jesuit influences in early modern Russian education is Max J. Okenfuss, “The Jesuit Origins of Petrine Education: Russian Students in Europe in the Age of Peter the Great,” in *The Eighteenth Century in Russia*, ed. J. G. [John Gordon] Garrard (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 107–20.

⁸ There is a wealth of excellent studies of this institution. In English, see

Nikolaos A. Chrissidis, *Academy at the Court of the Tsars: Greek Scholars and Jesuit Education in Early Modern Russia* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2016). In Russian, there are also works by D. N. Ramazanova and D. A. Yalamas: D. N. Ramazanova, “Brat'ia Likhudy i nachal'nyi etap istorii Slaviano-greko-latinskoi akademii (1685–1694 gg.)” (Candidate’s diss., Russian State University for Humanities, 2003); Ramazanova, “Bogoiavlenskaia shkola: Pervyi etap Slaviano-greko-latinskoi akademii,” in *Ocherki feodal'noi Rossii* (Moscow: URSS, 2003), 7:211–37; Ramazanova, “Ucheniki Ioannikiia i Sofroniia Likhudov v Slaviano-greko-latinskoi akademii 1685–1694 gg.,” in *Istoriografiia, istochnikovedenie, istoriia Rossii X–XX vv.: Sbornik statei*, ed. L. A. Timoshina (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskikh kul'tur, 2008), 353–64; Ramazanova, “Slaviano-greko-latinskaia akademiia: Tsentr prosveshcheniia v Rossii v kontse XVII v.,” in *Religioznoe obrazovanie v Rossii i Evrope v XVII v.*, ed. E. Tokareva and M. Ingot (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Russkoi khristianskoi gumanitarnoi akademii, 2011), 133–41; D. A. Yalamas, “Filologicheskaia deiatel'nost' brat'ev Likhudov v Rossii” (Candidate’s diss., Moscow State University, 1992); Yalamas, “Znachenie deiatel'nosti brat'ev Likhudov v svete grecheskikh, latinskikh i slavianskikh rukopisei i dokumentov iz rossiiskikh i evropeiskikh sobranii” (PhD diss., Moscow State University, 2001).

⁹ Max J. Okenfuss, *The Rise and Fall of Latin Humanism in Early Modern Russia: Pagans, Authors, Ukrainians, and the Resiliency of Muscovy* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995).

From that perspective, it becomes clear that already on the eve of Peter's reign, his realm, broadly conceived, boasted up to half a dozen colleges that fit the standard European model of elite schooling of that era. Such colleges also continued to be created in the empire in the eighteenth century, most notably the one in Kharkov (1721); additionally, a number of more basic schools in the same tradition were being founded across Russia by the bishops who were themselves graduates of the Mohyla Academy. This realization requires us to reconsider not only the view of pre-Petrine Muscovy as an educational "clean slate" but also the timing and the routes of importation of new educational forms to Russia, associated traditionally with the arrival of German and French educators in the eighteenth century. In the emergent new narrative, the role of the Ukrainian educated elites as cultural intermediaries looms especially large: while in political terms these elites might have been the subalterns to their new Muscovite masters, in education and in the cultural sphere in general the positions were largely reversed. This also means a realization that the history of the Petrine state's relationship with education was not only about the creation and promotion of schools. Any new narrative of early educational tradition in Russia must also address the question of why the apparently flourishing Ukrainian colleges declined in the first half of the eighteenth century and eventually disappeared, even while the Petrine state was allegedly pursuing the policy of enlightening the realm. To some extent, this might be due to the same reason that led to the relative decline of the Jesuit-run or Jesuit-inspired colleges all over Europe; but part of the answer certainly has to do specifically with the ways the new "well-regulated" Petrine state mobilized, monopolized, and rerouted financial and human resources, stifled social and geographic mobility, and curtailed the autonomy of bishops and local elite communities to whose support such colleges owed their existence.

"Peter the Demiurge" Myth

The "Petrine paradigm" implied that in education, just as in other fields—or, perhaps, even more so, given the trademark role of educational reforms in the mythology of Peter's reign—it was Peter personally who designed and directed all change. Whereas in Western Europe "educational theories and schools of all sorts were usually the results of individual experimentation in pedagogical techniques," in Russia, allegedly, "it was the emperor, and the emperor alone, who initiated serious educational activities."¹⁰ The Promethean role of the first emperor was especially obvious against the sorry backdrop of alleged negligence of

¹⁰ Black, *Citizens for the Fatherland*, 3. Most recently, this paradigm has been restated in an astoundingly straightforward form in A. I. Liubzhin, *Istoriia russkoi shkoly*, vol. 1, *Russkaia shkola XVIII stoletii* (Moscow: Nikeia, 2014).

schools by his immediate successors, who “made no serious attempt to strengthen or even maintain the educational projects undertaken by Peter the Great.”¹¹ More broadly, it was the state and the state alone that promoted learning in Russia, hence the notion that the “Russian educational system was built from the top down.”¹² “The paramount factor in Russian formal education was the critical role of the state. Paradoxical as it may seem, the state played a much larger role in education and cultural life than, say, in the sphere of economic activity,” argued Marc Raeff, unquestionably the preeminent Western scholar of eighteenth-century Russia of the previous generation.¹³

This reading echoes the official mythology of Peter’s reign crafted by the sovereign himself and his closest associates, portraying the emperor as a Pygmalion single-handedly chiseling Galatea-Russia out of a shapeless block of marble. It also reflects, however, the efforts of the two brilliantly educated and staunchly conservative nineteenth-century ministers of education, Count Sergei Semenovich Uvarov (1786–1855, in office 1833–49) and Count Dmitri Andreevich Tolstoi (1823–89, in office 1866–80), who in their official reports and scholarly works purposefully crafted a narrative where the state was unequivocally presented as the only and certainly the only legitimate agent of education in Russia.¹⁴

Recent historiography, however, increasingly recognizes this narrative as a politically motivated construct.¹⁵ It also works to uncover the numerous non-state educational actors, toward whom the state, both before, during, and after Peter I, played a passive, if not repressive role. Thus, a study of the numerous attempts by the various Greek missionaries, monks, and church leaders to set up schools in seventeenth-century Russia demonstrates that these overtures were, in fact, met with little interest by the tsars. Earlier works tended to present these encounters as the acts of “invitation” by Muscovy’s sovereigns, so conscious of the need to enlighten their domains. Upon closer inspection, however, this reading appears groundless. Rather, it was the Greek missionaries themselves who banged on the Kremlin’s doors, so to speak, with their educational proposals, as they hoped to use Russia and Russian resources as a base from which to keep up the light of faith in their own homeland. The schools they sought to establish would train personnel for printing Orthodox religious books intended for distribution in the Balkans, the goals of enlightening Russia itself being

¹¹ Black, *Citizens for the Fatherland*, 44.

¹² McClelland, *Autocrats and Academics*, 9.

¹³ Raeff, *Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia*, 130.

¹⁴ See, for example, D. A. Tolstoi, *Vzgliad na uchebnuu chast’ v Rossii v XVIII stoletii* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk, 1883).

¹⁵ E. A. Vishlenkova, “Universitetskii vek v Rossii: Diskursivnaia istoriia,” in *Izobretenie veka: Problemy i modeli vremeni v Rossii i Evrope XIX stoletii*, ed. E. Vishlenkova and D. Sdvizhkov (Moscow: NLO, 2013), 292–94.

secondary, at best, in their minds. The tsars, for their part, just as consistently viewed these ideas with indifference.¹⁶

Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, this was also very much the case under Peter I.¹⁷ While educational reforms are viewed as central for his reign, he has not authored a single extensive document on the matter in his own hand. This appears especially striking since the workaholic sovereign could spend days and weeks personally penning or editing successive versions of lengthy regulations on topics dear to him. Alas, education was not one of them. To some extent, this was probably because Peter understood education very much in terms of traditional tutorship and viewed schools as informal artisanal workshops. While he certainly called again and again for “learning” to be promoted in his realm, establishing a school meant for him appointing a teaching master who would take care of the matter, just as teaching masters did in Muscovy under his august predecessors. So, while the emperor did sanction the establishment of the Naval Academy in St. Petersburg in 1715, for example, he did not personally contribute to its rules and regulations; in fact, he barely visited the institution at all—we know of only three visits: two in 1715 and one in 1724. This is in contrast to his persistent efforts over the years to direct the practical training of the *gardes-marine* (midshipmen) on board ships Russian and foreign: the sovereign would personally assign them to practice with foreign navies, track their progress, order their stipends to be paid, examine them upon return, and so on. This is only one way among many in which Peter’s take on education emerges as a less unequivocally “modern” than we used to think a few decades ago. Thus, scholars point out that neither Peter himself, nor his immediate successors on the throne, envisioned education as an instrument of governance and a tool of disciplining in a Foucauldian sense. It was only Catherine II who began to see the interiorization of self-restraint by her elite through *vospitanie* (upbringing) of good and loyal subjects as a key task of her schools, or put differently, to “conceive of ways of manipulating its subjects through the school system.”¹⁸

So, rather than by Peter I himself, the more institutionalized, formal, rational-bureaucratic schools were designed and established by numerous projectors of all stripes who were driven by personal motives, such as inventing jobs for themselves and their clients, promoting their confessional agendas, or a mixture of these. Such projectors included a variety of foreign missionaries, most notably the Jesuits and the Pietists; genuine or self-

¹⁶ B. L. Fonkich, *Greko-slavianskie shkoly v Moskve v XVII veke* (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskikh kul'tur, 2009),

¹⁷ Igor Fedyukin, *The Enterprisers: The Politics of School in Early Modern Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

¹⁸ Catriona Kelly, *Refining Russia: Advice Literature, Polite Culture, and Gender from Catherine to Yeltsin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 11–12; Kosheleva, “Education as a Problem.”

proclaimed foreign experts; and the homegrown Russian enterprisers. In that sense, it would be futile to attempt to distill from their diverse proposals a unified “Petrine” vision of school and schooling. Rather, Peter presided over their multifaceted efforts, sometimes giving them the green light, and sometimes declaring them “capricious” (especially if the pesky educators demanded significant investment for their projects). Some apparently “modern” proposals failed to attract any support at all, while others were allowed to languish, underfunded and undermanned. It is also by the efforts and agendas of such projectors that the trajectory of school development in Russia was largely determined throughout much of the eighteenth century.

“Resistance to Schooling” Myth

The idea that Peter had to beat his “boyars” into schools, to literally use his big stick to force the young members of the Muscovite elite to study, is one of the more striking elements of the Petrine myth. It dovetails well with the notion that there was no education in the (barbaric and ignorant) country prior to Peter, and also with the notion that the state, embodied here by the ruler, has always been the prime driver of educational modernization in the country. It also fits well with the broader concept of “progress through coercion,” which presents Peter as the first in a long line of modernizing rulers who simply had to use harsh measures to push the backward and lazy populace forward toward a future of greatness and enlightenment. So, standard accounts stress the “almost universal apathy, even hostility, with which [Peter’s educational] proposals were greeted by Russians”;¹⁹ the degree to which Peter’s educational efforts “were hampered by the indifference (if not downright hostility) of most of the population”;²⁰ and so on and so forth.

In practical terms, this myth does seem to be supported by evidence: after all, we do find high levels of truancy in Petrine schools. It is undeniable that many young nobles, as well as members of other social groups, ran away from the schools to which they had been assigned, or spent time there in drinking and debauchery. What is missing, however, is the concrete evidence that this truancy was a form of resistance to education and learning as such—for example, because it might have been perceived as being contrary to Orthodox norms or to the dignity of a Muscovite aristocrat. Surely, some principled resistance to the new, Western learning must have taken place too, but what is striking is precisely the absence of any evidence of such resistance on a notable scale.

¹⁹ Black, *Citizens for the Fatherland*, 35.

²⁰ McClelland, *Autocrats and Academics*, 6.

Indeed, as long as recruitment into new schools was largely organized on a voluntary basis (which was the case roughly up to the mid-1710s), the government was able to attract hundreds of applicants; offering modest stipends was especially helpful for recruiting poorer nobles. In the autumn of 1711, the Navigation School in Moscow, for example, had 506 students receiving stipends, including 126 young noble and 130 sons of soldiers from the Guards (some of them likely also of noble origin).²¹ The wealthy and aristocratic pupils, on the other hand, flocked in droves to the private teaching establishments set up in Moscow by foreign teachers, including the Jesuits.²² The problems began, however, when the government tried to force noble students into educational trajectories that did not fit their life circumstances or their social reproduction strategies.

One of the first such episodes took place in the spring of 1697, when the authorities arbitrarily assigned over fifty students to a new “school” of Italian language. Appeals from members of the elite who did not want their children to attend this particular institution, as wasting years learning Italian did not lead to any obvious career prospects, went unheeded: unsurprisingly, a few months later, half the students were missing. Unperturbed, the government had raised enrolment to 115, but by February 1698 less than a third of students actually attended classes.²³ In 1715, Peter began pressing his young aristocrats into the newly founded Naval Academy in St. Petersburg, again without any regard for their own preferences. Additionally, the costs of living in the new capital were exorbitant, and many students were not provided with any stipends whatsoever; even more importantly, however, it soon became apparent that no mechanism for promotions to commissioned ranks was built into the school’s design, so the graduates could languish in the transitory status of a *gardes-marine* for years and years. Not surprisingly, the school became extremely unpopular with the elite: attempts to avoid studying there at all costs were not a sign of laziness or cultural conservatism, but quite rational behavior. On the other hand, the Noble Cadet Corps, founded in St. Petersburg in 1731, not only offered its students quality accommodation and good stipends but also guaranteed commissioned ranks in the army for successful graduates (and, indeed, delivered on this promise). Even more importantly, it recruited only volunteers (with some exceptions). Again, not surprisingly, the Corps became popular with the elite and was

²¹ *Materialy dlia istorii russkogo flota* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Morskogo ministerstva, 1866), 3:314

²² See, for example, V. A. Kovrigina, *Nemetskaia sloboda Moskvyy i ee zhiteli v kontse XVII–v pervoi chetverti XVIII vv.* (Moscow: Arkheograficheskii tsentr, 1988), 309.

²³ M. P. Lukichev, “K istorii russkogo prosveshcheniia kontsa XVII v. (Ital’ianskaia shkola brat’ev Likhudov),” in Lukichev, *Boiarskie knigi XVII veka: Trudy po istorii i istochnikovovedeniiu* (Moscow: Drevlekhranilishche, 2004), 356–57.

able to secure a steady flow of applicants from the upper-middle ranks of the nobility, while the Naval Academy struggled to attract and retain students.²⁴

Nor it is easy to square the “resistance to education” thesis with our growing realization that the vast majority of teaching in eighteenth-century Russia (not to speak of seventeenth-century Muscovy) was actually done without any financial or organizational input from the state. Certainly, basic education, such as literacy, continued to be provided in Russia primarily by private tutors throughout the entire eighteenth century. These tutors might have included local priests or sextons, retired soldiers or clerks, and the like. Instruction in more advanced subjects, such as arithmetic and geometry or foreign languages, could be offered by numerous foreigners or by army NCOs and officers, clerks, and so on, who sought to supplement their meager income or render a service to their relatives, friends, and superiors.²⁵ The more affluent aristocrats, of course, hired expensive private tutors for their children, who offered home education in no way inferior to that offered in state schools.²⁶

Most of these teaching initiatives remain invisible for historians precisely because they did not involve any government funding or supervision, and so produced no records. When such records do exist, we find a striking picture indeed. In 1780, a survey identified a lively educational market of twenty-six private pensions in St. Petersburg, overseen mostly by foreigners, and thirty-one “Russian” schools organized within individual parishes; in Moscow, a 1785 survey found eleven more or less institutionalized pensions.²⁷ There were also private schools in provincial towns, especially in the Western regions of the empire. Tellingly, one such survey conducted by the enlightened experts from the Academy of Sciences resulted in calls for the closure of all the parish-based locally funded “Russian”

²⁴ See Igor Fedyukin, “Nobility and Schooling in Russia, 1700s–1760s: Choices in Social Context,” *Journal of Social History* 49, no. 3 (2016): 558–84.

²⁵ Most recently, see, for example, Olga Kosheleva, “To Discipline Those Who Teach: The Penetration of Petrine Educational Reforms into Russian Educational Practice,” in *Everyday Life in Russian History: Quotidian Studies in Honor of Daniel Kaiser*, ed. Gary Marker et al. (Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2010), 317–28; Ekaterina I. Kislova, “‘Grammaticheskoe uchenie’ i modeli tserkovnogo obrazovaniia 1720-kh gg.” *Quaestio Rossica* 7, no. 2 (2019): 475–491. Vladislav Rjéoutski, “Les écoles étrangères dans la société russe à l’époque des Lumières,” *Cahiers du monde russe* 46, no. 3 (2005): 473–527. For some telling references to private teachers in the backwater Kursk province in the mid-eighteenth century, see the diary of a landlord: I. P. Annenkov, “Dnevnik kurskogo pomeshchika I. P. Annenkova,” in *Materialy po istorii SSSR*, vol. 5, *Dokumenty po istorii XVIII veka* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Akedemii nauk, 1957), 713, 742. Extensive evidence of the key role played by private tutors in teaching basic literacy at the end of the century in the Archangel province is found, for example, in the works of a local antiquarian: V. V. Krestinin, *Trudy: Tvorcheskaiia biografiia; Bibliografiia*, ed. A. A. Kuratov and E. I. Tropicheva (Arkhangel’sk: Arkhangel’skaia oblastnaia nauchnaia biblioteka im. N. A. Dobroliubova, 2007), esp. 139.

²⁶ Vladislav Rjéoutski, ed., *Quand le français gouvernait la Russie: L’éducation de la noblesse russe 1750–1880* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2016).

²⁷ P. N. Stolpianskii, “Chastnye shkoly i pansiony Peterburga vo vtoroi polovine XVIII veka,” *Zhurnal ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia*, n.s., 38, no. 3 (1912): 1–23; K. V. Sivkov, “Chastnye shkoly i pansiony Mosckvy v 80-kh godakh XVIII v.,” *Istoricheskii arkhiv* 6 (1951): 315–23; G. I. Smagina, *Akademiia nauk i Rossiiskaia shkola: Vtoraia polovina XVIII v.* (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1996), 88–89.

schools in the capital, as teaching there was found to be “quite imperfect.”²⁸ So, while a generation ago a leading scholar of eighteenth-century Russian history could assert in passing that “as for private schools, they played a definitely subordinate role, for throughout the eighteenth century there were only a few private schools (almost exclusively in the capitals) with a very small enrolment,”²⁹ today, on the contrary, we view the post-Petrine state schools as only one segment in a much larger universe of learning in Russia. By some reckoning, as late as the mid-nineteenth century private schools of all sorts actually outnumbered government-run ones and enrolled more students.³⁰ Put differently, there existed extensive market demand for educational services, and Russians of all classes were willing to pay for them. Indeed, learning was clearly an important form of capital that some families sought to cultivate and pass on from one generation to another, and that played a crucial role in their social strategies.³¹

The “Military Needs” Myth

The idea that the imposition of imported educational forms on the Russian elite was driven by the requirements of war-making goes back, again, to Peter himself, who justified the considerable dislocation his reforms caused by exactly these considerations. This idea also fits seamlessly with our modern social sciences orthodoxy that views external pressures and the demands of war-making as the key driver of early modern state-building and “Westernization” in general.³² On the face of it, this thesis appears incontrovertible: indeed, the first schools established by Peter focused on training artillerymen, military engineers, and naval officers.

To say that the new schools were used for producing military personnel is not the same, however, as to say that the establishment of schools and the forms they took somehow naturally followed from the demands of war-making. To begin with, in early modern Russia, just as in Western Europe, the military and naval professionals themselves, whether Russian or foreign, did not view formal schooling as the only, or even the best way of entering their field. The simple fact is that throughout most of the eighteenth century professional training

²⁸ Smagina, *Akademiia nauk i Rossiiskaia shkola*, 89.

²⁹ Raeff, *Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia*, 131.

³⁰ For an overview, see S. V. Sergeeva, *Istoriia domashnego obrazovaniia i chastnoi shkoly v Rossii (Posledniaia chetvert' XVIII v.–pervaia polovina XIX v.)* (Penza: Izdatel'stvo PGTA, 2010).

³¹ Igor Fedyukin and Salavat Gabdrakhmanov, “Cultural Capital in an Early Modern Elite School: The Noble Cadet Corps in St. Petersburg, 1732–1762,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 46, no. 4 (2016): 485–516.

³² The vast literature in this tradition is arguably traceable to Michael Roberts, “The Military Revolution, 1560–1660,” in *Essays in Swedish History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1967), and Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1990* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990).

in European armies and navies, including the technical branches, was mostly conducted through practical apprenticeship on board ships and in regiments. Indeed, Peter himself viewed not the schools but the *gardes-marine* and his life guards as the key instruments for producing officers for the navy and the army, respectively. It was while serving as a private, and then as an NCO in the guards, under the monarch's own watchful eye, that a young noble was groomed to become an officer in the field army. Likewise, the way to prepare for a career in civil administration, according to Peter, was by apprenticing in the government bureaus, by practicing the art of making extracts of pending cases and the relevant legislation under the direction of senior clerks, rather than at a university.

In that sense, the actual trajectory of institutional development of Petrine and post-Petrine schools could not be taken to somehow automatically follow from the demands of war-making. Nor is there any way to demonstrate that a school-trained officer or engineer in the eighteenth century was “obviously” more effective or efficient than his colleagues who received their training through apprenticeship or home schooling (indeed, many eighteenth-century professionals viewed the school-trained officers as good-for-nothing). Thus, the theleological narrative in which early modern schools naturally evolved toward progressively more and more “modern,” and therefore, “better” organizational forms is simply unsustainable. Instead, the evolution of schools, indeed, the introduction of formal schooling itself, should be viewed as a process that was contingent at every single step on a variety of cultural, social, and political factors. The outlook of these new schools was largely determined by the backgrounds and intellectual agendas of those projectors and “administrative entrepreneurs” who built them. Most notably, the design of the Noble Cadet Corps, the most successful and influential secular school of the eighteenth century, reflected primarily its founders' Pietists pedagogical doctrines and anthropological sensibilities, rather than any military considerations.³³

No less important in shaping the outlook of post-Petrine schools were also the goals of social engineering: indeed, eighteenth-century Russia might have been a pioneer in terms of explicitly using educational institutions to create a new elite, the “true nobility” on a large scale, to bring about a “new breed of men.” At the same time, there appear numerous works that go beyond simply stating that “Peter I educated Russia” and seek to quantify the actual share of the elite that was educated in various post-Petrine schools. Even more ambitiously, some of them attempt to assess the extent to which the propensity to receive different levels

³³ Igor Fedyukin, “‘Ot oboikh istinnoe shliakhetstvo’: Sukhoputnyi Shliakhetnyi Kadetskii korpus i konstruirovaniie poslepetrovskoi elity, 1731–1762,” in *Ideal vospitaniia dvorianstva v Evrope (17–nachalo 19 vv.)*, ed. Vladislav Rjeoutskii, Wladimir Berelowitch, and Igor Fedyukin (Moscow: NLO, 2018), 245–73.

and types of education was determined by the wealth or rank of one's family, and also whether the different levels of schooling were linked to different career outcomes.³⁴ Another important historiographical development has been the renewed interest in measuring the spread of literacy in early modern Russia.³⁵ These studies also tend to take a finer-grained view of the notion of "education," not only investigating the specific sets of skills that education entailed but also what it actually meant to be literate, to be recorded as familiar with arithmetic or French, and so on.³⁶ All of this moves us beyond the history of education as a chronology of schools founded by Peter and his successors toward the history of acquisition of skills by the Russians themselves—and toward understanding how the choice of these schools reflected the needs and priorities of pupils and their families, rather than those of state service.

Indeed, the elite itself successfully reshaped the schools and educational practices according to its own needs of social reproduction, self-presentation, and self-legitimation.³⁷ Again, the Noble Cadet Corps is an excellent example here. Contrary to the assumption that "the early secular institutions were dominated entirely by the service requirements of the

³⁴ I. V. Faizova, *Manifest o vol'nosti i sluzhba dvorianstva v XVIII stoletii* (Moscow: "Nauka," 1999); Sergey Chernikov, "Les carrières des généraux en Russie de 1730 à 1763: L'influence des réformes de Pierre le Grand sur la mobilité sociale dans la composition des élites," *Cahiers du monde russe* 57, nos. 2–3 (2016): 505–44; Fedyukin, "Nobility and Schooling"; A. M. Feofanov, "Predpochteniiia v poluchenii obrazovaniia rossiiskogo dvorianstva: Na primere generaliteta vtoroi poloviny XVIII-pervoi chetverti XIX veka," *Vestnik PSGTU: Seriiia II* 77, no. 1 (2017): 66–77.

³⁵ On literacy, see Belkin Stevens Carol, "Belgorod: Notes on Literacy and Language in the Seventeenth-Century Russian Army," *Russian History* 7, no. 1 (1980): 113–24; M. B. Bulgakov, "Gramotnost' posadskikh liudei g. Rostova Velikogo v pervoi polovine XVII v.," in *Istoriia i kul'tura Rostovskoi zemli: 1997* (Rostov: Muzei-zapovednik Rostovskii Kreml', 1998), 34–39; Gary Marker, "Literacy and Literacy Texts in Muscovy: A Reconsideration," *Slavic Review* 49, no. 1 (1990): 74–89; Christoph Witzernath, "Literacy and Orality in the Eurasian Frontier: Imperial Culture and Space in Seventeenth-Century Siberia and Russia," *Slavonic and East European Review* 87, no. 1 (2009): 53–77; Boris Mironov, "The Development of Literacy in Russia and the USSR from the Tenth to the Twentieth Centuries," *History of Education Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (1991): 229–52; A. V. Zakharov, "Gramotnost' 'tsaredvortsev' v epokhu Petra I," *Vestnik Permskogo universiteta. Seriiia: Istoriia* 35, no. 4 (2016): 24–33. On the teaching of arithmetic in Muscovy, see V. S. Kuznetsova and R. A. Simonov, "Tsifirnaia schetnaia mudrost': Pervyi russkii uchebnyk arifmetiki," in *Prosveshchenie i pedagogicheskaiia mysl' Drevnei Rusi: Maloissledovannye problemy i istochniki; Sbornik nauchnykh trudov*, ed. E. D. Dneprov (Moscow: Akademiia pedagogicheskikh nauk SSSR, 1983), 94–104; R. A. Simonov, "Russkaia uchebnaia matematicheskaiia literatura kontsa XVII veka," in Dneprov, *Prosveshchenie i pedagogicheskaiia mysl' Drevnei Rusi*, 104–11; Peter B. Brown, "Muscovite Arithmetic in Seventeenth-Century Russian Civilization: Is It Not Time to Discard the 'Backwardness' Label?," *Russian History* 39, no. 4 (2012): 393–459.

³⁶ Vladislav Rjéoutski, "Le français et d'autres langues dans l'éducation en Russie au XVIIIe siècle," *BIBLIOΘHIKA: E-Journal of Eighteenth-Century Russian Studies* 1 (2013): 20–47; Derek Offord et al., eds., *French and Russian in Imperial Russia: Vol. 1; Language Use among the Russian Elite; Vol. 2; Language Attitudes and Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015); Ekaterina I. Kislova, "'Latin' and 'Slavonic' Education in the Primary Classes of Russian Seminaries in the 18th Century," *Slovène* 2 (2015): 72–91; Kislova, "Frantsuzskii iazyk v russkikh seminariiakh XVIII veka: Iz istorii kul'turnykh kontaktov," *Vestnik PSGTU: Seriiia III* 44, no. 4 (2015): 16–34; Kislova, "Le français et l'allemand dans l'éducation religieuse en Russie au XVIIIe siècle," *BIBLIOΘHIKA: E-Journal of Eighteenth-Century Russian Studies* 1 (2013): 48–74; Kislova, "Nemetskii iazyk v russkikh seminariiakh: Iz istprii kul'turnykh kontaktov," *Vestnik PSGTU: Seriiia III* 41, no. 1 (2015): 53–70.

³⁷ See, for example, the relevant chapters in the latest collected volume: Liudmila Posokhova, "Nobilitatsiia kazatskoi starshiny Getmanshchiny i Slobodskoi Ukrainy i evolutsiia strategii vospitaniia v ee srede v XVIII veka," in *Ideal vospitaniia dvorianstva*, 60–81; Mikhail Kiselev and Anastasiia Lystsova, "Problema dvorianskogo obrazovaniia v publiksistike u v pravitel'svennoi politike Rossiiskoi imperii na rubezhe 1750-kh i 1760-kh godov," in *Ideal vospitaniia dvorianstva*, 152–80; Vladislav Rjéoutski, "Pro et contra: Ideal vospitaniia vysshego dvorianstva v Rossii (vtoraia polovina XVIII-nachalo XIX veka)," in *Ideal vospitaniia dvorianstva*, 208–44

state,”³⁸ by far the most popular subjects there were neither military engineering (which very few cadets took), nor tactics and strategy (which were not taught as a separate discipline), but the gentlemanly arts of fencing, equestrianism, and dancing, which corresponded to the young men’s self-perception as members of the pan-European nobility.

The Myth of “Wholesale Borrowing”

Finally, the myth of wholesale borrowing in education does not appear to be any more sustainable than it does in other fields. The traditional narrative, largely rooted in the opinions of Peter’s Western European contemporaries themselves, might have viewed the emperor as literally transplanting foreign educational forms onto Russian soil. Yet, institutions and practices are never really “transplanted”: as scholars of cultural transfers point out, the translated/transferred texts and concepts are never the exact replicas of their original selves, but rather the products of the local conditions that provoked the translation/transfer to begin with. This implies, of course, the need to explore the sociological mechanisms of such transfers and the role of translator as an actor who acts within the context of and in reaction to his own circumstances.³⁹

So, in the case of education and schools, it is patently clear that Peter I, his associates, and successors studied the Western European theories and practices and explicitly drew upon them—but it is equally clear that the institutions they built were not even close to being the exact replicas of their supposed prototypes. The Moscow Navigation School might have echoed, in some ways, the Royal Mathematical School at Christ’s Hospital in London, but it was certainly not its clone. The founders of the Noble Cadet Corps in St. Petersburg referred to the example of the Berlin Cadet Corps and even hired some officers and graduates of the Berlin establishment, but the school they created differed in many important aspects from the Prussian one.⁴⁰ The Academy of Sciences, the Moscow University, and the empire-wide network of “garrison schools” set up in the 1730s all had some Western European prototypes, but they also deviated from them, sometimes glaringly so. Again, this should not be surprising—indeed, it could not have been otherwise: the situation here is not much different from the case of, say, the research university model that emerged in the United States in the early twentieth century under the strong influence of the German Humboldtian university

³⁸ Raeff, *Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia*, 130.

³⁹ See most notably Michel Espagne, *Les transferts culturels franco-allemands* (Paris: Éd. Recherche sur les civilisations, 1999); Martin J. Burke and Melvin Richter, eds., *Why Concepts Matter: Translating Social and Political Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

⁴⁰ Igor Fedyukin and Maya Lavrinovich “Sukhoputnyi Kadetskii korpus v Sankt-Peterburge (1730-e) i ego berlinskii probraz,” in “*Reguliarnaiia akademiia uchrezhdena budet [...]*”: *Obrazovatel’nye proekty v Rossii v pervoi polovine XVIII veka*, ed. Igor Fedyukin and Maya Lavrinovich (Moscow: Novoe izdatel’stvo, 2014), 264–316.

before assuming a very different form that reflected local economic, political, and cultural conditions.

The onus is upon us, therefore, to understand the Petrine and post-Petrine schools neither as exact replicas of the Western European ones nor as their “perverted” echoes, but rather as the products of experimentation by various Russian actors who adopted, reconfigured, and recombined the “borrowed” elements in accordance with their own goals and the resources available to them. When Baron de Saint-Hilaire, a French adventurer and impostor, set out to pen for Peter I the regulations for the Naval Academy in St. Petersburg, he simply translated two chapters from the *Ordonnance de Louis XIV pour les armées navales et arsenaux de marine* [Ordonnance of Louis XIV for the naval forces and naval arsenals] of April 15, 1689.⁴¹ Yet, given the local social conditions and the realities of the service state that Peter was creating, the resulting institution bore very little resemblance to the original French schools for *gardes-marine* and had no exact parallels in other European countries: there were hardly any other cases in the eighteenth century where studying in a specialized school became the only path to a commission in the navy. Similarly, the Moscow University (1753) was very different from a “normal” Western European university in the sense that it was not an autonomous academic corporation: instead, its professors were emphatically state servants; nor did it have a faculty of theology. In these regards, however, it arguably foreshadowed the future outlook of the French or German universities that would be modernized, that is, stripped of the vestiges of their medieval autonomous past, in the nineteenth century.⁴²

More careful investigation might also reveal the cases, however few these might be, when post-Petrine Russia was held up as a model in the realm of education by Western European contemporaries. When in 1750 Joseph Pâris-Duverney presented to Louis XV his plans for the *École Militaire*, the first proper modern military school in France, he explained that “among all the models that could be taken to form [it], there could not be a better one than the Cadet School in Petersburg established in 1732 by Field Marshal von Münnich.” Indeed, Pâris-Duverney supplied the king with an extensive memorandum describing in much detail the structure of the Russian institution.⁴³

⁴¹ *Ordonnance de Louis XIV: Pour les Armées navales et Arcenaux de Marine* (Paris: Chez Estienne Michallet, 1689).

⁴² For a study of Russian universities in the pan-European context, see A. Iu. Andreev, *Rossiiskie universitety XVIII-pervoi poloviny XIX veka v kontekste universitetskoi istorii Evropy* (Moscow: Znack, 2009).

⁴³ “Mémoire: Collège académique,” April 22m 1750. Archives Nationales (Paris), Le carton des Rois, K 149.1, N^o. 5¹. The description of the St. Petersburg Corps is in “Mémoire: College de Cadets Etably a Petersvourg en 1732,” April 18, 1750, *ibid.*, No. 8¹. I am extremely grateful to Gemma Tidman of the University of Oxford for sharing these documents with me and to Harold Guizar, then of the University of York, for providing further advice regarding their authorship.

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Author:

Igor Fedyukin, National Research University Higher School of Economics (Moscow, Russia).

Center for History Sources, Director.

E-mail: ifedyukin@hse.ru

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