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EDUCATION POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN ADMINISTRATION IN THE OCCUPIED KHERSON REGION (END OF FEBRUARY - OCTOBER 2022)

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The article analyzes the policy of the Russian authorities in the occupied Kherson region in the sphere of education, during the period from the end of February to the of October 2022. It turned out that at the initial stage, the top Russian government had no definite plans for the occupied territories. Most likely, at that moment, it was not about the full integration of Kherson region into the Russian Federation but only about military-civilian control over the territory.

At the time of the illegal annexation of Kherson region and its inclusion in the Russian Federation (30 September, 2022), the failure of the occupation administration's policy in creating a quasi-educational policy is demonstrated. The following factors cause this situation: a) lack of a well-developed policy of action in the educational sphere in the occupied territory; b) rapid change of the situation on the fronts, activation of the process of liberation of the occupied territory by the Ukrainian army, strengthening of morale among the population; c) low level of support of the population of the occupation authorities and collaboration among educators; d) successful opposition of the Ukrainian government and local self-government bodies to the challenges faced by the education of the occupied territory in organizational and financial matters.

Keywords: Russian-Ukrainian war; Russian aggression against Ukraine; "Special military operation" ("SMO"); occupied; Kherson region; education.

У статті проаналізовано політику російської влади у сфері освіти на окупованій Херсонській області у період з кінця лютого до жовтня 2022 року. Встановлено, що на початковому етапі у російського керівництва не було певних планів щодо окупованих територій. Швидше за все, на той момент, йшлося не про повну інтеграцію Херсонської області до складу Російської Федерації, а лише про військово-цивільний контроль над територією.

На момент незаконної анексії Херсонської області та включення її до складу Російської Федерації (30 вересня 2022 року) демонструється неспроможність політики окупаційної адміністрації щодо створення квазіосвітньої політики. Таку ситуацію зумовлювали такі фактори: а) відсутність розробленої політики дій в освітній сфері на окупованій території; б) швидка зміна обстановки на фронтах, активізація процесу визволення українською армією окупованої території, зміцнення морального духу серед населення; в) низький рівень підтримки населенням окупаційної влади та колаборації серед освітян; г) успішне реагування уряду України та органів місцевого самоврядування на виклики, що постали перед освітою окупованої території в організаційних і фінансових питаннях.

Ключові слова: російсько-українська війна; російська агресія проти України; «Спеціальна військова операція» («СМО»); окупація; Херсонська область; освіта.

Introduction. The course of the so-called “Special military operation” (“SMO”) in Ukraine demonstrates that despite public slogans of Putin's regime of “demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine”, the usual expansion and desire to dismantle the international subjectivity of Ukraine is hidden, finally placing it in the zone of its geopolitical interests. The situation in Kherson region, occupied in a matter of days, evidences the ease with which Putin's regime planned to implement its plans quickly.

An analysis of the actions of the Russian authorities in the occupied region, in particular in the sphere of education, during the period from the end of February to of October 2022, shows that at the initial stage, the top Russian government had no definite plans for the occupied territories. Most likely, the deceptive confidence in the quick results of the “SMO” and the prospects of establishing a puppet regime in the Ukrainian capital did not require deep understanding of the issue. A similar scenario coincides with the expert opinion of the Austrian military analyst Tom Cooper (2022).

The heroic resistance of Ukrainian people and their army overruled Putin's initial vision. At the end of April, the unpredictable unfolding of events on the fronts forced the Russian authorities to get a course on forming a management vertical, which had to implement a pro-Russian policy in the occupied territory. Most likely, at that moment, it was not about the full integration of Kherson region into the Russian Federation but only about military-civilian control over the territory. We can talk about the intensification of the integration process with the subsequent annexation of the occupied territories since the creation of the government of Kherson region on July 4, among the seconded Russian officials. They had to organize this work professionally, particularly in education.

At the time of the illegal annexation of Kherson region and its inclusion in the Russian Federation, the failure of the occupation administration's policy in creating a quasi-educational policy is demonstrated.

Literature review. Domestic studies of the Russian authorities' policy in the occupied Ukrainian territories in the educational sphere are sporadic and are not characterized by a systematic approach. There are some attempts to analyze the occupation policy in Crimea and parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions during 2015-2016 and 2020. Analytical studies of the Ukrainian Independent Center of Political Researches describing the situation in Crimea (Tyshhenko & Smirnova, 2015; Tyshhenko et al., 2016) and the Ukrainian Helsinki Union for Human Rights in Crimea and Donbas (Movchan et al., 2020) are distinguished by a significant amount of data, provide a general idea of the policy of the occupation authorities, and offer response algorithms for the Ukrainian authorities to challenges in this sphere. The special attention should be paid to the articles of Gridina (2016) & Khomenko (2016), where the authors analyzed the organization peculiarities of the educational process at schools and universities of the "people's republics" of Donbas.

The educational policy in the occupied territories after the full-scale aggression on February 24, 2022 has not been a subject of systematic scientific analysis yet. The article written by Pankiev (2022) reflects the tendencies of Putin regime's policy to eradicate Ukrainian national identity in areas under Russian control. At the 21st Annual Aleksanteri Conference "The New Era of Insecurity: How Russia's War in Ukraine Changes the World", Honchar (2022) presented a report where he analyzed the steps taken by the occupation administration to implement the Russian educational standards in Kherson region. Interesting data giving some insight according to the

situation in education in the occupied territories, are focused in analytical studies of CEDOS (2022) & OSCE (2022). Scientists tried to reflect various aspects of the perception of life under occupation (Homanyuk et al, 2022) in the sociological study "A specialist under occupation" by interviewing specialists in various fields, in particular, educators. Thus, it could be claimed, the analysis of the policy of the occupation administrations in the educational sphere in the occupied territories after February 24, 2022 has not acquired its thorough understanding yet. The aim of this publication is to try to reveal the trends of the occupation administration's policy in the educational sphere in Kherson region from the beginning of the full-scale invasion to the crisis caused by the counteroffensive of the Ukrainian army in October 2022.

Methods. The article is based on a complex of methods of historical and pedagogical, political and sociological researches, which helped to determine the trends and factors influencing the educational policy of the Russian authorities in the territory of occupied Kherson region during the mentioned period. The author carried out a content analysis of open source publications of domestic and pro-Russian online publications, social networks, which enabled to follow the course of actions of the occupation administration in the field of education chronologically. Personal observations and access to unpublished data made it possible to have a critical approach to the analysis of the statistical data from pro-Russian sources regarding the educational activities of educational institutions' restoration, the circumstances of the involvement of teachers and students in educational activities under the Russian programs. Generalizations allowed the author to substantiate and formulate the given conclusions.

Results and Discussion. At the end of March, Serhii Danilov, an expert at the Ukrainian Center for Middle Eastern Studies, drew attention to the Russian authorities' lack of understanding of what to do with Kherson region. In particular, he noted that there are "chaotic, uncoordinated, illogical movements of the occupier in Kherson region. They don't know what to do, they don't have any resources to occupy [the territory] completely: they are floundering and trying to ensure somehow safety and stability in their "first rear" (although Kherson oblast is also in the rear, but right on the front line). They are afraid of everything. They feel extreme resistance. There are no collaborators, there is no one to create the sophisticated, fake "[Kherson People's] Republic" it is necessary to invent, to establish an occupation regime." (Shevchenko, 2022).

Local collaborators were talked about only on the 21st day of the Russian invasion. On March 16, the meeting of the group of people called themselves "Salvation Committee: for peace and order" was held in the seized building of Kherson Regional Council (MOST, 2022, March 16). The Russian propaganda channel "Russia Today", which showed that event, showed the participants of the event and their individual performances very carefully. Kherson blogger Kyrylo Stremousov, who announced himself as the chairman of the meeting, ex-mayor of Kherson and ex-member of the Ukrainian parliament Volodymyr Saldo, PhD of Pedagogy Tetiana Kuzmich, deputy of Kherson City Council Ihor Semenchov were among them present. It is noteworthy, the last two were under investigation at that time on suspicion of committing serious crimes (treason, embezzlement of budget funds).

Another month had passed since the beginning of the invasion before the Russian authorities started the movement to form regional occupation authorities. On April 26, it became known about the meeting that took place in the building of the Kherson City Council, where the head of the military-civilian administration of Kherson region V. Saldo and the head of the administration of Kherson O. Kobets were introduced (MOST, 2022, April, 26a). Interestingly, the "regional military commandant" appointed these people; its status was not known to anyone at all (MOST, 2022, April, 26b). Forming local occupation administrations and restoring educational institutions was supposed to legitimize the occupation regime and its successors in the eyes of the local

population. In addition, education is one of the most powerful tools of “Russification” (Vishchyk, 2022).

At the local level, removal from the power of Ukrainian local self-government bodies took place sporadically, starting in March and continuing until the beginning of August. In the region's large cities, Nova Kakhovka, Kakhovka, Henichesk, during March-April, people, probably recruited in advance by the Russian special services, were appointed as heads of military-civilian administrations. In smaller communities, those willing to rule under the Russian flag had to be sought both from the existing leaders (by negotiating, threatening, and even depriving them of their freedom) and those who agreed to collaborate (acting officials, school principals, pro-Russian activists). For example, Iryna Kozlyonkova, the head of the local education department, agreed to head the occupation administration of Bilozerka in June (MOST, 2022, June 21).

Although their activities were limited, the occupying authorities had to put up with and coexist with Ukrainian mayors for a long time. Beryslav was almost the last community where local authorities were dispersed at the beginning of August.

This uncertainty of the occupation authorities regarding the seizure of power in the communities is related to the following factors:

- a) lack of a specific policy regarding the management of the occupied territories;
- b) the lack of the necessary financial resources at the initial stage to solve the issues of community life;
- c) need for significant staff opportunities to fill management positions in community management bodies.

An eloquent reaction to such coexistence and helplessness were the threats addressed to the heads of the Yuvileinenska and Vynohradivska communities said in June by the deputy head of the regional occupation administration, K. Stremousov: “All those who sabotage the work at the places, all those who do not give a concrete, clear position in the villages regarding our future development as part of the Russian Federation, will be eliminated soon, many of you will simply be punished, because this cannot be done.” (MOST, 2022, June 14).

On June 7, it became known that the department of education and science, headed by T. Kuzmich (MOST, 2022, June 7), functioned in the structure of the occupation military-civilian administration, and Olena Savina (MOST, 2022, July 10), the former deputy director of Kherson school No. 55, became its deputy.

At the local level, the process of the reelection of education management by the occupation authorities was also sporadic and relatively slow. Most likely, this was due to the lack of quality communication between the regional and local occupation administrations, misunderstanding at the initial stage of the tasks in this area and the lack of necessary staff. In Kakhovka, on April 21, it became known that Iryna Makhneva, the owner of a small business selling Portuguese shoes, who had unsuccessful teaching experience in several Kakhovka schools, was appointed as the head of the occupation department of education (Baturin, 2022). In Beryslav, it was reported that the local education department was headed by a physical education teacher from the Support School in early June and that the director of Kherson kindergarten No 60, Maryna Voronina, agreed to head the occupation education department of Kherson on July 23 (MOST, 2022, July 23). But in the military civilian administration of Nyzhni Syrohozy the education department was not created even at the beginning of September, so specialists from nearby Henichesk provided consultations on teaching according to Russian programs (Administration of Nizhniye Serogozy district, 2022, September 2).

In our opinion, forming regional governments in July-August was a turning point indicating the last change of course of Putin's regime to the intensification of the integration process and the

subsequent inclusion of the occupied territories into the Russian Federation. On July 4, V. Saldo announced that he had signed a decree on the formation of the government of Kherson region. "The formation of the government of Kherson region is important for understanding the future of this region... A fundamentally different authority is being formed, the first government of an independent, non-Ukrainian Kherson region." (ForPost, 2022, July 5). The government was headed by the former first deputy head of government of Kaliningrad region, Serhii Eliseiev, and its members were mainly Russian officials. Mykhailo Rodikov, former director of the Education Department of occupied Sevastopol, was appointed as a Minister of Education and Science. Giving comments concerning this appointment, V. Saldo emphasized that M. Rodikov had adapted the educational system of Sevastopol to Russian realities and coped with it perfectly.

For some time, M. Rodikov and T. Kuzmich were simultaneously responsible for the educational policy of the occupied Kherson region, but later, T. Kuzmich moved to the rank of deputy minister. Thus, the Department of Education and Science of the occupation military-civilian administration became a part of the Ministry.

Intensification of the occupation authorities' work in education began at the end of April – the beginning of May when along with the appointment of collaborating principals at schools, a campaign was launched in some communities to encourage educators to cooperate voluntarily. In Kherson, a similar event occurred on May 26 in the building of the Kherson City Council. V. Saldo, T. Kuzmich and Russian parliament member I. Kostiukevych took part in it. T. Kuzmich declared in her speech that Kherson schools had to work according to Russian programs and switch to the Russian language studying¹. According to V. Saldo, "just the presence of school representatives meant support of the occupation authorities." The event was obviously a failure, as representatives of a little more than 20 schools, out of 64 operating in the community, took part in it, and later one of the participants asked if educators who did not want to cooperate could leave the event, only a few spectators left in the hall (Ukrinform, 2022, May 26).

Obviously the occupation administration did not like such a demarche. For example, one of the occupying Telegram channels called the principals of Kherson schools who "refused" to appear at the meeting with Saldo as "outlaws", arguing that "most heads of educational institutions in the time of Ukraine had either Russophobic views or were loyal to Kyiv regime, pursuing a policy of destroying the Russian language and culture." (MOST, 2022, May 29). Such a thesis did not correspond to the reality since in Kherson region, where the vast majority of the population refers to themselves as Ukrainians by national identity, the language issue has never gained any acuteness. In some schools of Kherson, Henichesk, Nova Kakhovka, and Kakhovka, Russian was the language of the educational process or was studied as a separate subject, not to mention the possibility of free interpersonal communication in Russian among students and teachers, that was never prevented.

On June 14, the pro-Russian media reported on the presentation by the Minister of Education of Russia, Serhii Kravtsov, of a "Russian-style certificate" to the graduates of Kherson school No. 48 (Main in Kherson, 2022, June 14). It was reported that this school had received a certificate from the Federal Accreditation Service to give this document a kind of legal legitimacy (REGNUM,

¹ Approximately from the middle of May, at least in public, high-ranking Russian officials began to visit Kherson: First Deputy Chairman of the Council of the Federal Assembly of Russia, General Secretary of the Party "United Russia" Andriy Turchak, Deputy Chairman of the Russian parliament Anna Kuznetsova, Russian parliament member Ihor Kostiukevych, and on July 4, a Deputy Head of Putin's Administration Serhiy Kiriienko was in the region, he is the curator of the implementation of Russian policy in the occupied territories.

2022, June 14). At the same time, the closure of Russian state registers did not provide an opportunity to verify the authenticity of that fact and to establish which other educational institutions of Kherson region had received accreditation, which is an essential stage for the integration of occupied educational institutions into the Russian educational environment.

Moreover, this event left several questions:

- a) why didn't the pro-Russian mass media show the graduates themselves?
- b) what legal basis was the Russian education document issued on if the school leavers graduated according to the Ukrainian state standards, which differ significantly from the Russian ones, at least in terms of the list of educational subjects?
- c) why was the handing of Russian education documents not observed in other areas of the occupied region?

Most likely, this event was organized for the pro-Russian mass media to break the information wave from another event – the beginning of the issuance by the Ukrainian authorities to school leavers of Kherson region of documents on state education in Kryvyi Rih.

On June 16, in an interview for local television, T. Kuzmich urged graduates to exchange their Ukrainian education documents for Russian ones in order to enter Russian universities on preferential terms later. On July 21, the occupying Ministry of Education reported that 70 graduates of the region have already taken the advantage of this opportunity, which is only 0.4%



of their number in 2022 (Ministry of Education and Science of Kherson region, 2022, July 21).

Figure 1. The meeting of the Deputy Head of Putin's Administration Serhiy Kiriienko with the directors-collaborators of Kakhovka. July 4, 2022 (Baturin, 2022, July 4).

Despite speaking everywhere about the quick restoration of the educational process based on the Russian programs, the occupation administration faced a serious problem - a low level of collaboration among educators. If in Donbas and Crimea the high level of loyalty of the local population to Russia has been supported by money and cultural expansion for many years, nurturing the pro-Russian element and preparing the appropriate base, but it has never been the same in Kherson region. (MOST, 2022, November 10).

The massive refusal to cooperate of the leaders and teachers of Kherson region surprised not only the local occupying government but also Russian authorities since the passage of time, propaganda, and strengthening of the regime in the occupied territory had to have the opposite

effect. On May 10, at a press conference in Simferopol, the deputy head of the occupation military-civilian administration of Kherson region, K. Stremousov, did not control his emotions when he said that some local teachers refused to change the Ukrainian education programs: "We planned to start schools after May 10, but the sabotage of some teachers, who crossed the line of adequacy, everywhere they say that they continue to teach (according to Ukrainian programs), this is fascism, this story continues." (Krivosheev, 2022).

If it became known about the collaboration of individual teachers at the end of April, the collaboration of the heads of educational institutions spread at the beginning of July. For example, during the meeting with her team, the director of Kherson kindergarten No. 37, Tetiana Abbasova, announced that the kindergarten would start working according to Russian programs from September 1, and she offered all those who disagreed to resign. In Kherson kindergarten No. 65, this initiative was led by the methodologist of the institution (MOST, 2022, July 4) since the director Svitlana Mekhlina did not agree to such a proposal and "resigned."²

In such conditions, the occupation authorities replaced the heads of educational institutions with their supporters in two ways:

a) appointment as principals the deputy principals, teachers who expressed their desire to cooperate and lead independently. Those people were assigned to the same institution where they had worked or to another one with vacant positions.

b) appointing people who did not have any pedagogical education but believed they could manage an educational institution. They were acquaintances of leaders and workers of occupation administrations, technical staff of educational institutions, and even random people. For example, in Kakhovka, Kateryna Hadoomska, who did not have a pedagogical education, was appointed as the director of kindergarten No. 6 "Sonechko." The head of the local occupation department of education even did not hide the fact that the criterion for the appointment of this person was a long-standing acquaintance with her parents (Center of journalistic investigations, 2022, July 17). It is known that some of the local collaborators-managers initially received a financial incentive of 150,000 rubles. (Probably it was a one-time promotion).

In Kherson school No. 32, the head of the household Kostyantyn Nedelkov declared himself the headmaster. The teachers say that he openly persecuted the patriotic part of the staff. "There was a case when a teacher came to pick up a laptop that had been provided under an international project. After that, K. Nedelkov wrote a report against her to the newly created police and forced her to return the equipment. Later, he ordered not to let teachers get into their classrooms. The current headmaster decided not to intervene in the conflict and told them to figure it out themselves." (Antypenko, 2022). It should be noted that there were cases when the newly appointed principals, with the help of the military, forcibly took away from teachers the equipment they used at home legally during online classes.

The situation with professional teachers and kindergarten teachers under the occupation authorities was more difficult. A significant number of teachers unequivocally refused to cooperate with the nominees of the occupation authorities. Some of them remained to wait for the liberation of the territory by the Ukrainian army, and some left for the controlled territory of

² Hereinafter, we put the word "resigned" in quotation marks according to Ukrainian legislation, the appointment and dismissal of the manager can be carried out only by the founder of the institution, a local self-government body, with the entry of relevant data into the state register. Since the vast majority of such "dismissals" were only a declaration, based on the circumstances of being occupied, for the Ukrainian authorities these people remain current managers.

Ukraine or abroad. According to incomplete data as of mid-October, 4,098 teachers (or 35%) left the territory of Kherson region.

The teacher of Kherson school No. 32 spoke about the unusual behavior of the principal, who took an “unclear position.” “It is known that he was in Crimea twice in the spring. At the end of June, he gathered us, handed out sheets of paper and asked us to mark «+» or «-». It meant whether we were ready to work according to the new rules. We said that we would write “yes” or “no”, because “minuses” could be turned into “pluses”, the interlocutor recounts (Antypenko, 2022).

To solve this problem, the newly appointed principals held public and private conversations with educators, emphasizing the human desire for stability, mainly financial. In individual discussions, the Russian protégés stressed that enough people were willing to cooperate, and delaying the selection could deprive the teacher of his job and, thus, of financial sources (Antypenko, 2022). The salary of 40,000 rubles, which was slightly higher than the Ukrainian salary, was supposed to be an incentive for collaboration. Such an argument did not arouse any emotions among teachers who encountered such conversations, as it was unconvincing, at least for the reasons that if there was personnel potential, why did they have to persuade?

It should be emphasized that at the initial stage, the local occupation authorities had problems with finances, so the promise of significant payments and their implementation were delayed for several months. For example, at the end of April, the newly appointed director of Kakhovka school No. 1, Olena Tereshchenko, promised to pay her salary with food packages while encouraging teachers to cooperate (Baturin, 2022, April 28). Already in the middle of July, the occupying military civilian administration of Nova Kakhovka campaigned for teachers to work for a monthly payment of 50,000 rubles (MOST, 2022, July 22a).

The incident which happened in Kakhovka at the end of May also testifies to the difficulties with finances at the initial stage. The head of the occupying military civilian administration of Kakhovka, Pavlo Filipchuk, tried to force the employees of the local education department, who were subordinate to the legitimate authority of the community, to make changes to the information on the payment of wages from the Ukrainian budget. He wanted to remove from this list teachers who expressed their disagreement to cooperate with the occupation authorities and include new persons who agreed to cooperate (Kichych, 2022). (When this situation became public, the Kherson regional military administration blocked the treasury accounts of the Kakhovka community until the issue of payments could be secured, and the responsible employees of the education department did not leave for the controlled territory).

As for the issue of ensuring the financial stability of education workers, both those who remained in the occupied territory and those who left for a safe place, the policy of the Ukrainian authorities is implemented in two directions: a) payment of at least 2/3 of the official salary to employees (in some communities, local government, having financial capacity, pays the full official salary) who, for objective reasons, cannot perform their duties and put them on layoff; b) payment of the total amount of wages to employees who perform their duties, even if they are outside Ukraine (mostly these are teachers who teach online).

Such a policy was one of the reasons for the low level of collaboration among educators who, for some reason, stayed in the occupied territory. In some communities of Kherson region at the beginning of September, not a single teacher agreed to cooperate (for example, in the Khrestivka, Tavrychanka, Ivanivka communities), or their number was insignificant (in Beryslav community, only 7 out of 175 teachers who remained in the occupied territory (69%) became collaborators) (4%).

In this context, it is necessary to pay attention to an interesting phenomenon that took place at least in Beryslav and Kakhovka. While holding campaign meetings with educators, the local occupation administration knew they continued to receive salaries from the Ukrainian authorities. Surreal, but the occupiers even emphasized that they saw nothing wrong with the fact that the collaborators would receive both Russian and Ukrainian salaries. Moreover, the self-proclaimed rector of Kherson State University T. Tomilina complained: "Just think, the Ukrainian authorities want to pay teachers for not going to work and teaching children... How could it be explained to a person that it is necessary to go to work if a person stays at home and receives a salary." (Antypenko, 2022).

Along with actions regarding voluntary collaboration, there are known facts of the deprivation of liberty of educators with an active public position or authority in the educational environment. We can single out three motivations for such actions on the part of the occupiers:

a) attempts to break the will of authoritative teachers, force them to cooperate, and encourage other teachers not to resist. For example, Viktor Pendalchuk, the headmaster of Kakhovka school No. 1, who was twice in captivity for several weeks (at the end of April and in the middle of September), did not agree to cooperate. The headmistress of Kherson school No. 48, Olena Kirtskhalia, was held captive for several days and then forced to appear in front of the Russian propaganda media.

Under pressure, the woman said there was peace in Kherson thanks to the Russian military and that she would recommend teachers to teach children according to the new [Russian] curriculum. After she was released, she left for the controlled territory of Ukraine. Later, O. Kirtskhalia informed the team and parents that the institution works and will work only according to Ukrainian programs (Antypenko, 2022). Instead, we have the example of the head of Novokakhovka school No. 10, an activist of the former pro-Russian Party of Regions Viacheslav Reznikov, who was arrested by the Russian police for unknown reasons and later headed the education department in the occupation administration of Nova Kakhovka;

b) filtering measures of the Russian special services to identify in the teaching environment people with an active pro-Ukrainian position or those who are in touch with the Ukrainian military men. For example, the arrest of Iryna Razumey, a teacher of Kakhovka school No. 1 who did not hide her pro-Ukrainian views, or Serhiy Nosach, a teacher at the Beryslav support school, a member of the city council;

c) teachers who had combat experience, in particular in Donbas. For example, Viktor Kudlai, the principal of the Chornyan Lyceum of the Tavrii City Council, a participant in hostilities, was in captivity for a long time;

After a short, in rare cases, extended stay in captivity (up to 2 months), the slaves were released. It is not known for sure how many educators were deprived of freedom from February to October.

Educators who agreed to cooperate had to undergo retraining courses in Crimea to master Russian curricula. The head of the occupied Crimea, S. Aksyonov, made a similar initiative at the beginning of May. Then he said that within eight months, until September 1, 20,000 teachers of Kherson and Zaporizhia regions would take the courses (RIA. News, 2022, May 27). The first courses, with the participation of five newly appointed principals from Kakhovka and Skadovsk, were held on May 23-25 in Simferopol and Yalta (Administration of Skadovsk district, 2022, May 27).

In private conversations, teachers from different communities of Kherson region said that the local occupation administration emphasized the need for retraining. In the message dated July 22, the rector of the Crimean Republican Institute of Postgraduate Pedagogical Education, O.

Rudyakov, noted that 28,000 teachers from the Kherson and Zaporizhia regions only should undergo retraining (ZOV Melitopol, 2022, July 22). However, in the message dated August 28, it was announced that by the end of 2022, only 2,000 teachers from both occupied regions should have become participants (First Russian Tsarograd, 2022, August 29). Such a discrepancy between plans and reality confirms the low level of collaboration among teachers in the occupied regions.³

A more realistic number of collaborating teachers was introduced on August 8 by the occupation Ministry of Education, which reported that on August 5, 645 teachers in Kherson region (or 5.5% of the pre-war number) had agreed to teach according to Russian programs (Ministry of Education and Science of Kherson region, 2022, August, 8). On August 31, Minister M. Rodikov reported that “the teaching staff was 80% full”, although he noted that if there were not enough teachers, they would “invite them from Russia.” (Ministry of Education and Science of Kherson region, 2022, August 31). Similar statements of the occupying official only confirm the opinion about the failure of the previously declared initiative to send Russian teachers to the occupied territories.

During the summer, the occupation authorities constantly emphasized the importance of resuming the educational process from the new academic year according to Russian programs. At the same time, it was observed that the preparation process in other communities was less active than in Kherson and Kakhovka. For example, in Beryslav, the appointment of associate principals in local schools took place only at the beginning of August, and no measures were taken in the surrounding rural schools.

On July 15, the decree of the head of the military-civilian administration of Kherson region on the territory of the occupied region established 43 “state budget educational institutions”: 22 schools and 21 kindergartens in Kherson, Nova Kakhovka, Skadovsk, Kakhovka, and Oleshky, as well as 1 higher educational institution, Kherson Academy of Continuing Education (Ministry of Education and Science of Kherson region, 2022, July 23). On August 10, the occupation Ministry of Education reported that on September 1, 99 schools and 67 kindergartens would resume work in the region (Ministry of Education and Science of Kherson region, 2022, August 10). On August 27, Minister M. Rodikov announced the resumption of the educational process from September, 1 in 91 schools (or 24%)⁴, 62 kindergartens (13%), 10 out-of-school institutions (22%), 17 “secondary” professional institutions,⁵ 4 universities and Kherson Academy of Continuing Education (42%) (Ministry of Education and Science of Kherson region, 2022, August 27). On October 10, M. Rodikov announced new data: the educational process was carried out in 112 schools, but on September 1, there were 77 of them (Ministry of Education and Science of Kherson region, 2022, October 10). The reliability of such a number of working schools is doubtful, if only from the point of view that the same M. Rodikov drew attention to problems with the supply of teachers a month earlier. It is unlikely that within a month it was possible to meet the needs of 35(!) schools.

³ As of January 1, 2022 11,678 teachers worked in the Kherson region.

⁴ As of January 1, 2022, the following worked in the Kherson region: 382 schools, 481 kindergartens, 13 universities, 19 colleges, 21 professional lyceums.

⁵ Secondary professional institutions include professional lyceums and colleges in Russia, so the types of educational institutions we are talking about are not clear here.

Kherson Region

(as of the beginning of October 2022)

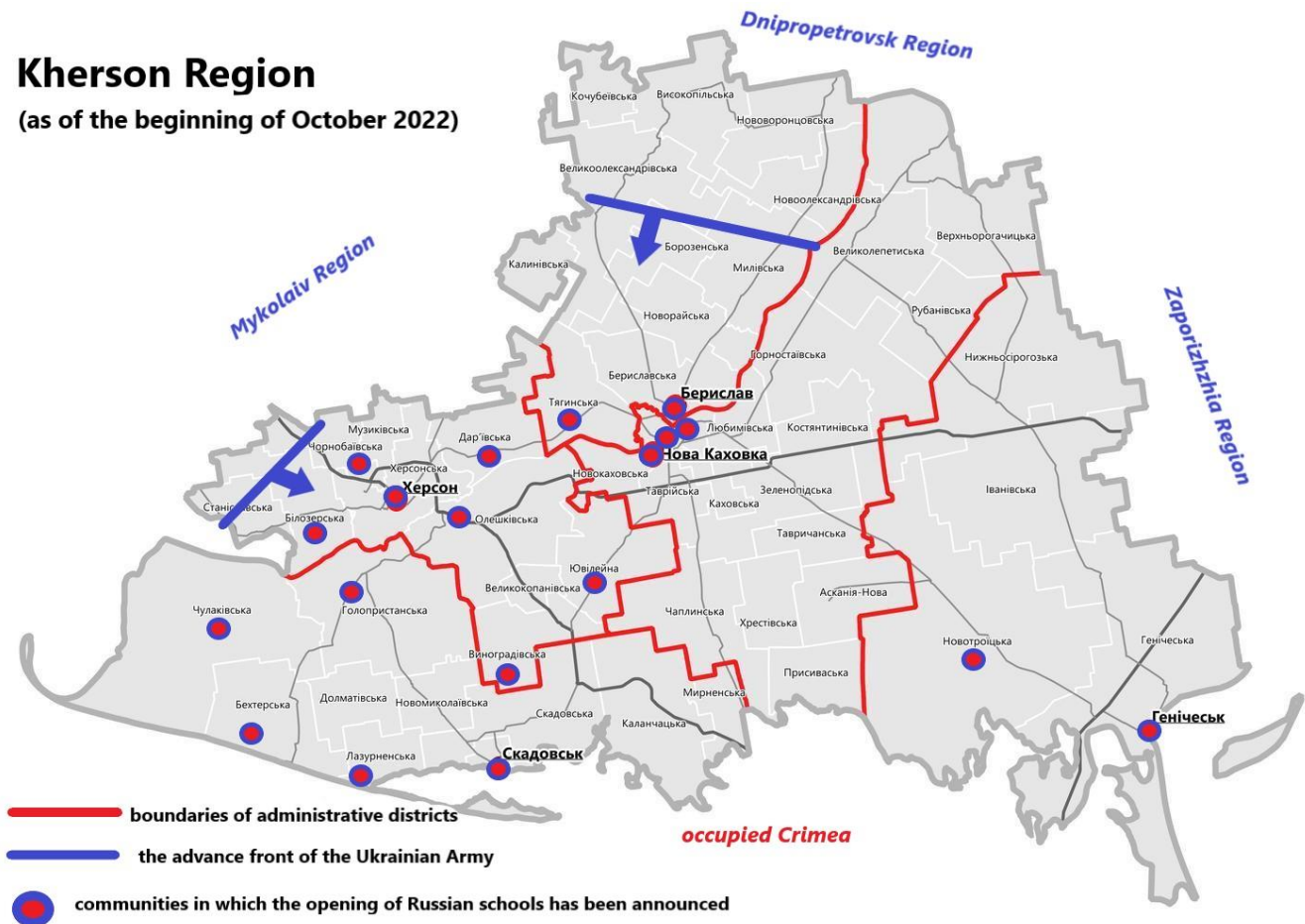


Figure 2. Communities of the Kherson region, where the occupation authorities announced the resumption of the educational process from September 1, 2022. Made by the author.

Most likely, such growing of the school network was provided at the expense of rural areas. For example, the occupying Nyzhniosyrohozka military-civilian administration announced the opening of two schools in its jurisdiction (Verkhniosyrohozka and Novooleksandrivska) only on September 12, but it will be possible to start the educational process as soon as teacher vacancies are filled (Administration of Nizhniye Serogy district, 2022, September 12).

Based on the analysis of information messages, it can be concluded that only 19 (or 42%) out of 45 communities of Kherson region controlled by the occupation administration on September 1, managed to declare the resumption of the educational process in schools and kindergartens (Kherson, Nova Kakhovka, Kakhovka, Oleshky, Beryslav, Tavriisk, Dariivka, Belozerka, Tiahinka, Henichesk, Bekhtery, Hola Prystan, Skadovsk, Lazurne, Novotroitsk, Yuvileine, Vynohradove, Chornobaiivka, Chulakivka).⁶

The small number of educational institutions that the occupying authorities were able to declare open, could also be explained by the fact that the Russian military men used school and sports facilities to accommodate the military contingent and store ammunition, although pro-Russian propaganda resources constantly deny this (MOST, 2022, May 19).

The figures used by occupation officials to highlight the “successes” of the campaign to attract children to study under Russian programs are quite revealing⁷. On August 8, the

⁶ Kherson region consists of 49 urban, village and rural territorial communities.

⁷ As of January 1, 2022, 113,562 students studied in schools of the Kherson region.

occupation Ministry of Education reported that on August 5, 10,740 children (Ministry of Education and Science of Kherson region, 2022, August 8) were registered for education in Kherson region, on August 10 this number decreased to 10,640, specifying that 900 of them were first-graders (Ministry of Education and Science of Kherson region, 2022, August 10). On August 31, Minister M. Rodikov announced that 18,000 students would sit at the desks, 7,000(?) of them are first-graders (Ministry of Education and Science of Kherson region, 2022, August 31). On October 10, the minister announced that there were 24,835 students in regional schools, while on September 1 there were 2,0156 (or 18% of the pre-war number) (Ministry of Education and Science of Kherson region, 2022, October 10). The far-fetchedness of the latest numbers, and even more with some dynamics to increase, are confirmed by the shortage of teachers and unscheduled vacations that began on September 22 (Ministry of Education and Science of Kherson region, 2022, September 21) and have been continuing for a month, which deals with the intensification of offensive operation by the Ukrainian army in the northwestern part of the region (Ministry of Education and Science of Kherson region, 2022, October 11).

Note, to increase the motivation of parents to send their children to school, on August 4, the occupation authorities announced the implementation of monthly payments of 4,000 rubles for each child from 0 to 23 years old, single parents 10,000 rubles, guardians 15,000 rubles; parents who received Russian citizenship had the right to receive financial support for the purchase of school supplies (Ministry of Education and Science of Kherson region, 2022, August 4). It was also emphasized that primary school students would get meals for free (Ministry of Education and Science of Kherson region, 2022, August 10).

The occupiers' problem was not only the lack of teaching staff but also the reluctance of parents to send their children to schools (New Day, 2022, June 11). This position of parents was the reason why certain schools that declared their readiness to start the academic year did not start working. This situation could be observed in Kakhovka community, where, despite the declaration, the Rozdollen school, schools No. 1 and No. 4 have not resumed work. In Beryslav, the previously announced opening of the Support school and No. 3, under the pretext of repairs, was postponed to the beginning of October. Instead, to force parents to change their attitude, messages began to spread in the information space of the occupied region that parents who evaded their children's education would be prosecuted, up to the deprivation of parental rights. Although the occupation authorities publicly denied such reports and called them machinations of Ukrainian propaganda, residents of some communities in conversations reported that they heard those statements from representatives of the local occupation authorities and their appointed directors (Ministry of Education and Science of Kherson region, 2022, August 15).

The situation with subjects that were supposed to be taught in occupied schools is unclear. Thus, during a meeting with educators of Kakhovka community at the end of May, the head of the military civilian administration, P. Filipchuk, emphasized that from the new academic year, the Russian language and literature, history and mathematics would be taught in the city's schools.

The program of professional development courses for teachers from the occupied territories, which took place in Yevpatoria in July-August, requires special attention. In particular, the courses were intended only for teachers of primary school, the Russian language, history, mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology (Ministry of Education and Science of Kherson region, 2022, July 17).

At the beginning of June, T. Kuzmich assured the residents of Kherson region that even though from the new academic year, all subjects would be taught in Russian, the learning of the Ukrainian language and literature would be continued (TASS, 2022, June 7). On September 1, she

emphasized that the Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar languages would be taught in native language classes. It was also stated that the study of the basics of religious culture and ethics would be introduced, and in the 9th grade, a special course dedicated to the work of the philosopher H. Skovoroda (TASS, 2022, September 1). The last one is the initiative of T. Kuzmich, who had some experience in teaching on this topic.

Most likely, according to the example of Crimea, it was planned that national languages would be studied optionally, and electively, with a gradual decrease in opportunities and the number of people willing to study them. This opinion is confirmed by the head of the education department of Kakhovka occupation administration, I. Makhniova, who in July, during the meeting in one of the village schools, stated that the Ukrainian language would be taught only as an optional but not as the main subject (Center of journalistic investigations, 2022, July 18).

In this context, the measures to “denazify” educational institutions of the region are indicative, which mainly manifested themselves in the destruction of Ukrainian state symbols, visual materials, the demonstrative sanitation of school library funds, from where, in addition to Ukrainian textbooks, fiction was removed, which, according to the occupiers, was a source of nationalism.

It is still unknown what subjects have been taught at schools of occupied Kherson region since the beginning of this academic year. Probably, the situation in each institution is individual and takes into account the available teaching staff. The reason for this opinion is the statement of M. Rodikov in the interview dated August 31, where he stated confusingly, “in the first quarter we will look... and those subjects that are not taught at the school, we will implement them in the second or third quarter, we will arrange the curriculum accordingly, to understand whether teachers will come to us or not.” (Ministry of Education and Science of Kherson region, 2022, August 31).

In the occupied territories, the Russian authorities repeated the practice they had practiced in occupied Crimea when the regions of the Russian Federation took “chiefship” over the communities. Such a policy was supposed to establish friendship between the territories and, at the same time, diversify the expenses of the federal government, attracting the financial resources of the regions (sometimes with a depressed economy) to the development of the occupied communities. In particular, the Kabardino-Balkar Republic was established to Skadovsk, and Pskov region to Beryslav (Ministry of Education and Science of Kherson region, 2022, August 18). The heads of these regions were personally responsible for such a partnership. In practice, this was manifested in the provision of 30 computers for schools in Skadovsk by the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria or the installation of a playground in Beryslav by partners from the Pskov region.

Regarding the resumption of activities of universities and colleges, the occupation authorities have even more problems in this matter than with schools.

On June 14, it became known about the seizure of the building of Kherson State University, one of the four state universities of the region (MOST, 2022, July 22). Tetiana Tomilina, PhD of Pedagogy, was appointed as the rector of the university by the occupation administration. It is noteworthy that in her interview with local television, T. Tomilina unequivocally stated that “no one could even dream of studying at master's and postgraduate programs of Moscow State University” when she was asked what diplomas graduates of this university would receive. It remains unknown which Moscow university it was mentioned and what this statement was based on. On August 15, local pro-Russian publications reported that this university had signed an agreement on cooperation with The Pavlov First Saint Petersburg State Medical University. The

document declared the implementation of joint research projects and the exchange of information (Tavria. News of Kherson region, 2022, August 15).

During the announced admissions campaign, the university declared that applicants were accepted exclusively for budget places in 79 specialties. The realism of such a thesis is doubtful since it is known that a small number of teachers agreed to collaborate, which does not allow to organize the educational process anyway. On September 2, the pro-Russian mass media reported that 400 people were enrolled in the first course of the university (KSU_official_Russia, 2022, September 2).

On June 17, it became known that its professor, DEng Dmytro Kruhlyi agreed to head Kherson State Maritime Academy (MOST, 2022, June 17). Only five people among the academy's teachers agreed to collaborate (MOST, 2022, June 29).

Kherson State Agrarian and Economic University were occupied last; at the end of July, its former teacher, PhD of Agricultural Yevheniia Chernyshova (MOST, 2022, August 1), was appointed as a rector, and Kherson National Technical University, was headed by its successor, a PhD of Engineering Halyna Raiko (MOST, 2022, July 31). Almost nothing is known about the educational activities of these institutions, as well as about the activities of colleges and professional lyceums.

Along with attempts to restore the educational process at the schools of Kherson region, perhaps the most important task of the occupation Ministry of Education was to conduct a summer health campaign in the camps of Crimea, Rostov region, Krasnodar region, the Republic of Adygea, the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria, and the Pskov region, where it was declared that 2,500 children would recreate (Ministry of Education and Science of Kherson region, 2022, August 12). Such a policy was intensified at the end of September when the occupation Ministry of Education announced an extraordinary vacation, allegedly related to the conducting of an illegal referendum.

Conclusion. To conclude the mentioned above, we can state that before the aggression, Putin's regime had no specific plans for the occupied territories. The rapid change in the situation on the fronts made the occupation administration intensify its work in the field of education as a provider of future Russification. Lacking social and political experience in Kherson region, the Russian authorities could not reproduce the success of public loyalty that had taken place in Donbas and Crimea. The overwhelming majority of educators in Kherson region did not cooperate with the occupation administration, which prevented the further quick and successful restoring the educational process in the region's educational institutions. An important role in supporting the moral and psychological state of educators who were under occupation was played by providing financial stability by the Ukrainian authorities and local self-government bodies.

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