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The Status and Sense of Social Well-Being of the Moscow Schoolteacher

Research on teachers in Moscow shows that their material circumstances tend to be better than those in the provinces, but also that collectively they have not yet formed definite opinions on recent educational reforms.

Schoolteachers make up one of the largest professional communities in today's Russia, a group that enjoys a certain amount of stability and constancy. At the same time, it is one of the most vulnerable

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social groups, one that was severely impacted by the set of reforms carried out in the post-Soviet period. The processes of modernization going on in Russian education have prompted mixed reactions in society and constitute some of the most urgent and intractable problems in the social system. These reforms have impinged on all strata of the population, every family, every individual. Thus it is extremely important to study the opinions of those who will have to be directly involved in implementing these reforms and to live and work in the changed circumstances.

The object of the study consisted of teachers engaged in general secondary education in Moscow. The topic consisted of changes in the economic status and the sense of social well-being of schoolteachers in Moscow in the course of the education reforms.

The objective was formulated as an analysis of the social, economic, and motivational changes in the school teaching community in connection with the reforms of general secondary education.

A total of 837 education workers were surveyed in the study “The Moscow Schoolteacher Today”: teachers in primary education, middle general education, secondary (complete) general education, teachers involved in supplementary education, social educators, organizing educators, and also school administrators.

The teachers were distributed as follows: 28.8 percent reported that they teach at the primary level of general education (henceforth, primary school), and 71.2 percent were teaching at the middle level and the secondary (complete) level of general education (henceforth the basic or middle school). Their positions were distributed as follows:

- middle-school teacher, 65 percent;
- primary-school teacher, 27.7 percent;
- school vice principal responsible for teaching and upbringing, scientific methodological, and innovative work, 8 percent;
- social educator, 2.7 percent;
- organizing educator, 0.8 percent;
- other position, 4.5 percent.

These types of educational institution were represented: general education schools, 68.2 percent; education centers, 11.6 percent; schools offering intensive study of particular subjects, 11.1 per-

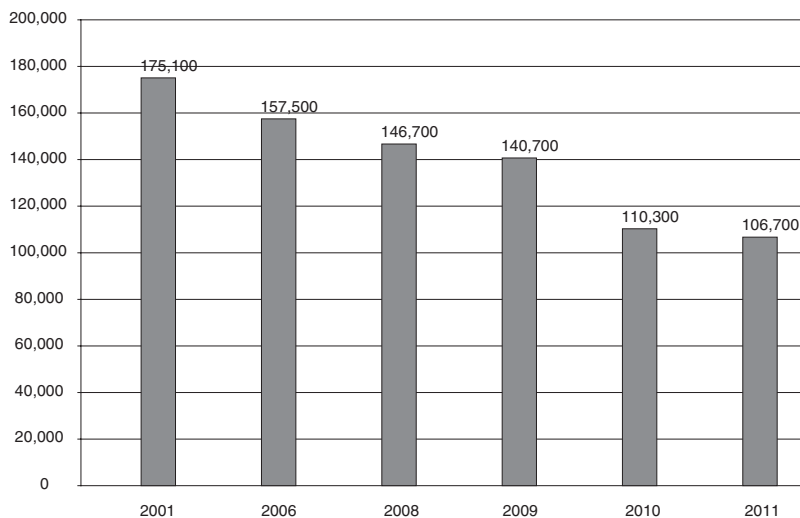


Figure 1. **Dynamic of the Number of Teachers in Moscow**

cent; gymnasiums, 6.1 percent; and lyceums, 3 percent. The survey participants represented all the main general secondary education institutions in Moscow.

Schoolteachers make up one of the largest socioprofessional groups, over 1 million people. The statistical data for Russia as a whole provide evidence that in the past few years the number of teachers has been going down gradually, and the corps of instructors is getting older. It is possible to link this tendency to the fact that the profession has become less attractive in the past few years as well as to the demographic slump, which has led to a decline in the number of students.¹ The statistical data on the dynamic of the number of schoolteachers in Moscow manifests the same tendency. Unfortunately, there are no available official statistical data on the age composition of the corps of schoolteachers in Moscow, but it is reasonable to assume that in the case of Moscow as well, the aging of the corps of teachers is an objective reality.² (See Figure 1.)

According to the survey data, the average age of a Moscow schoolteacher is forty-four. The percentage of young specialists in the sample who are twenty-six years old or younger is 8.6 percent;

those twenty-seven and thirty, who have acquired some professional experience, comprise 4.8 percent. The most numerous group of Moscow's schoolteachers consists of educators between the ages of forty-seven and fifty-four (24.9 percent). Two other large cohorts, between the ages of thirty-one and forty and between forty-one and forty-six, comprise 21.4 percent and 18.5 percent, respectively. Two older groups are relatively small: 9.2 percent of respondents are between fifty-five and fifty-nine, and 7.9 percent are over sixty.

One of the most prominent characteristics of the corps of schoolteachers is the high degree of feminization of the profession. In Russia as a whole, women make up 87.4 percent.³ In Moscow, the percentage of women is even higher—their percentage in the sample is 93 percent.

Our data on marital status indicate that most teachers are married (61.1 percent). Half of Moscow's schoolteachers have children or other dependents: 29.2 percent have one, 17 percent have two, and 2.8 percent have three or more. A total of 44.3 percent support only themselves.

When analyzing the indicators that characterize the professional composition of the corps of schoolteachers the common practice is to look at level of education, position, grade, and also work experience.

By way of comparison let us turn to the data for all of Russia. Unfortunately, in the case of most indicators of teachers' professional composition, state statistics are either lacking or inaccessible. The statistics provide only teachers' level of education and length of teaching experience.

From the standpoint of education, the composition of Russia's teachers has hardly changed in the past few years. The percentage of teachers with a higher professional education still makes up the majority and it is rising, with 78 percent in 2002 and 82 percent in 2008. A total of 15 percent of teachers have a secondary professional education, and another 3 percent have an incomplete higher education. The distribution tendencies with respect to these indicators, in the case of Moscow, coincide completely with those for all Russia. A number of them are a bit higher—in particular, the percentage of teachers with a higher education.

In terms of the level of education, the Moscow teachers surveyed were distributed as follows: an absolute majority have a higher education, with 91.6 percent. Educators who have an incomplete higher professional education add up to 1.9 percent; and those with a secondary specialized education add up to 4.1 percent. A total of 2.1 percent of respondents hold the academic degree of candidate or doctor of sciences. Among the teachers in the primary grades, considerably more have a secondary education (10.4 percent) than is the case for teachers in the middle grades (1.5 percent).

A substantial majority of Moscow's schoolteachers are graduates of pedagogical institutes and universities. A total of 83.4 percent have a pedagogical education; 6.8 percent have a diploma certifying an education in the humanities; 4.3 percent in the natural sciences; and 1 percent in culture and the arts.

The largest percentage of teachers who obtained an education in the humanities in a higher pedagogical educational institution are working in schools that offer the intensive study of particular subjects. Teachers who graduated from higher educational institutions other than pedagogical institutions, with natural science specialties are more likely to be working in lyceums (see Table 1).

The figures on teachers' pedagogical experience for Russia as a whole provide indicate that over half the educators have more than twenty years' experience in the profession. This percentage went up from 35 percent in 1999 to 52 percent in 2008, indirect evidence of a tendency toward aging of the pedagogical corps.⁴

A similar figure for Moscow is an indication that the corps of teachers is very experienced, with an average time teaching of eighteen years. The survey instruments enabled us to do a deeper study of this experience, asking how many years respondents had been working in a particular school and how many years they had worked in a specialty other than teaching. For Moscow's teachers, the average time spent in a given school is 12.9 years (8.4 percent have been working for over 26 years, 8.8 percent—21 to 25 years, 30.6 percent—11 to 20 years, 22.5 percent—6 to 10 years, and 28.5 percent—5 years or less).

Teachers are not inclined to change their place of work, and a stable collective has been established in each school. On the aver-

Table 1

What is the Profile of Your Education? Depending on the Type of School (% of teachers surveyed)

Profile	General education school	Lyceum or gymnasium	School offering intensive study of certain subjects	Education centers
Pedagogical (pedagogical institute or training school)	84.3	80.3	76.3	86.6
Humanities (nonpedagogical institution of higher learning)	6.3	6.3	15.1	2.1
Engineering and technical	3.9	3.9	4.3	7.2
Natural sciences (nonpedagogical institution of higher learning)	2.5	6.6	2.2	1.0
Culture and art	1.9	1.3	1.1	3.1
Other	1.1	0	1.1	0
No answer	0	1.3	0	0

age, the older teachers are, the longer they have been working in their present school and the less likelihood there is that they will change jobs (see Table 2).

However, a substantial number of teachers in each age group has been working in their present school for less than five years. The most stable groups are of preretirement age, between forty-seven and fifty-four, and between fifty-five and fifty-nine years old. More than half the corps of teachers in Moscow (58.5 percent) have spent their whole lives working in the system of education and do not have professional experience outside that sphere. A total of 16.5 percent have a relatively small amount of work experience outside the sphere of education (five years or less). About the same percentage (18.9 percent) went into school teaching after working for more than six years outside the sphere of education. The largest amount of work experience outside the sphere of education is found among teachers now working in schools offering intensive study of particular subjects.

Table 2

Length of Work Experience in the Present School, Depending on the Age of the Respondents (% of teachers surveyed)

Age	Up to 26	27–30	31–40	41–46	47–54	55–59	60 and older
No answer	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	1.0	2.6	0.0
Up to 5 years	90.3	50.0	33.5	23.2	15.9	11.7	13.6
6–10 years	9.7	45.0	24.6	27.1	21.2	11.7	16.7
11–20 years	0.0	5.0	39.7	31.0	40.4	40.3	21.2
21–25 years	0.0	0.0	1.1	15.5	10.1	10.4	22.7
26 or more	0.0	0.0	0.2	3.2	11.5	23.4	25.8

Most Moscow schoolteachers Moscow (63.9 percent) have lived their whole life or a large part of it in that city. A total of 18.4 percent have been living in Moscow for over fourteen years; 17.7 percent have been there for under fourteen years. Most newcomers came there from other cities or from rural communities (80.1 percent). A total of 13.9 percent came from the near abroad [the former Soviet republics—Ed.].

A relatively low percentage of respondents have a position that is different from that of teacher: 8.0 percent of those surveyed and 0.8 percent serve as organizers of extracurricular work. Most of the teachers (61.6 percent) have a class advisor.

The survey showed that only 2.4 percent of the teachers surveyed are of grades 7 to 11 on the Unified Salary Scale and one out of five (20 percent) have grade 12. Exactly the same percentage of teachers have grade 13 (20 percent). The largest percentage of Moscow's teachers (41.8 percent) have grade 14. The number of respondents that have grade 15 or higher stands at 3.5 percent.

And so, the typical teacher in a Moscow school is a woman of middle age—forty-four years old—is a Muscovite, has a higher education, and has been teaching for about eighteen years. She has probably been working in her present school for quite a long time. In order to get a more complete social and demographic image it is necessary to conduct a correlation analysis with other indicators.

One of the most important concerns in studying the reforms'

consequences for teachers is social status. In the past few years, schoolteachers' social status has gone down drastically in the minds of Russians; the profession, which used to be honored and respected, is no longer attractive. The main reason Russians do not consider the work of educators prestigious is the low pay.

Social status was examined first and foremost in terms of the prestige of the teaching profession under the conditions of the education reforms. Prestige is a reflection in the public consciousness of teachers' real position in the *socium*, characterizing the influence and respect that society attributes to the profession. The status of any profession indirectly reflects the hierarchy of types of work activity in society, determined by differences in the work's complexity and responsibility, the length and difficulty of professional education that is required, the level of pay, and so on.

Researchers characterize this change in social status as downward group mobility of the teachers' stratum. Professional status is a factor of the regulation of work behavior; any change brings in its wake a change in the role models of behavior. This is manifested in the point that despite the stern admonition to "sow what is wise, good, and eternal," the worsening conditions of life and work lead teachers to nurture a pragmatic approach to teaching: against the background of the declining value of children's upbringing there is an increasing desire to get more money for their efforts.

One of the most important objectives of the survey was to study the social status and prestige of teaching in Russian society, exploring teachers' own ideas about the status of their profession.

Teachers were asked how society rates the teaching profession. They expressed their views on the basis of a three-point scale (1—"highly," 2—"medium," and 3—"low"). In this case, the median was 2; thus ratings higher than 2 meant a low rating, while those under 2 meant a high rating. Society's medium rating of the teaching profession, from respondents' point of view, is low—2.5. Half the teachers surveyed think the public's rating of the teaching profession is low; 38.5 percent reported a medium rating, and only 4.2 percent reported a high rating.

In this regard, the young teachers are more optimistic, with a score of 2.3 points. The most pessimistic ratings are reported by teach-

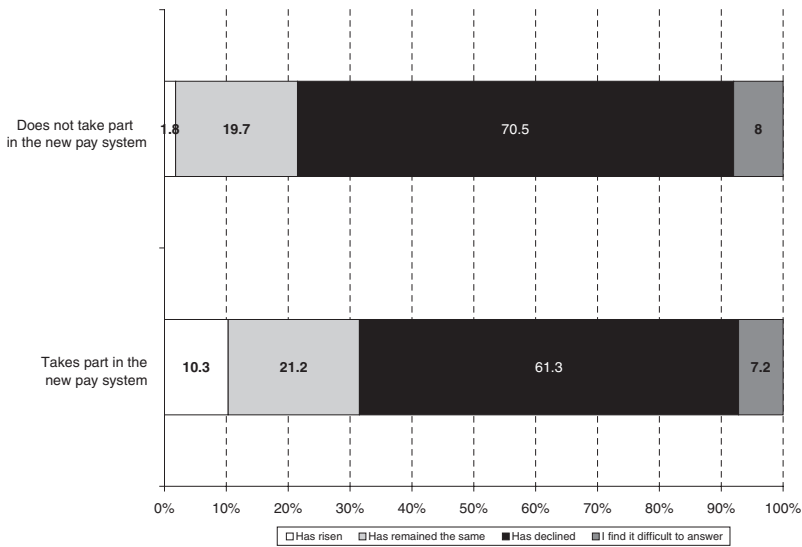


Figure 2. **In Your Opinion, How Has the Status of the Teacher Changed in the Past Five Years?** (depending on participation in the new pay system, % of respondents)

ers working in the profession for eleven to twenty years (2.6 percent). Over half the Moscow teachers (62 percent) say that the status of the teacher has gotten worse in the past five years, while the rest think that either it has not changed (20.9 percent) or has even improved (9.4 percent).

Young teachers are more optimistic. Among those teaching for five years or less, 13.3 percent think the prestige of the profession has risen in the past five years, while among those teaching twenty-one to twenty-five years, the corresponding figure is 7.6 percent.

The teachers' expectations in regard to any change in the profession's prestige in the next five years would be hard to classify as optimistic. A major portion of respondents do not anticipate any change in attitudes toward their profession in the foreseeable future. A total of 31.9 percent think its prestige will stay the same, 33.7 percent think it will fall further, and 12.1 percent think it will become more prestigious. It is possible to trace a functional relation between their expectations and the length of time they have been

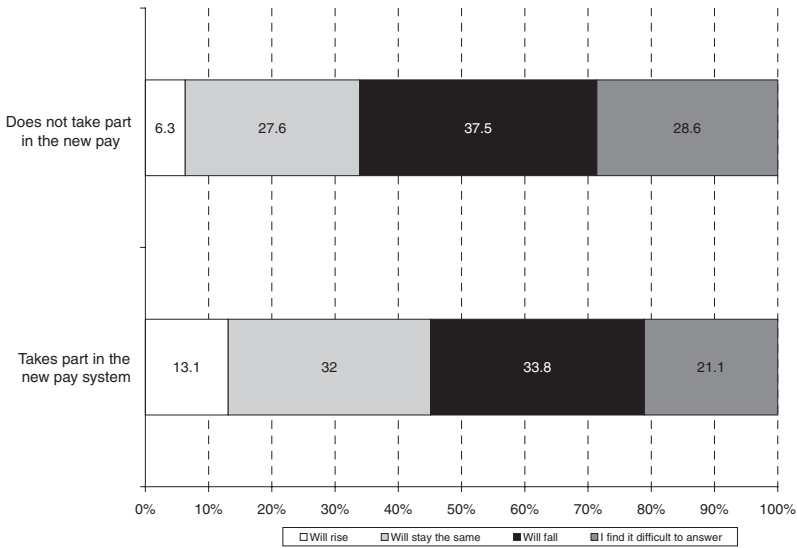


Figure 3. **In Your Opinion, Is the Prestige of the Teacher’s Profession Going to Rise or Fall in the Next Five Years?** (depending on participation in the new pay system, % of respondents)

teaching: The longer they have been teaching the less hope they have that the prestige of the profession will improve.

Interestingly, the respondents working in schools that make use of the new system of pay are more optimistic in their estimates of how the teacher’s status has changed in the past few years and how it will change in the next five years (see Figures 2 and 3).

The set of instruments used in the survey included a block of questions on the cultural sphere—the frequency of visits to the theater, the museum, and so on. These questions characterized the cultural needs of this socioprofessional group and its material abilities.

Respondents were asked how often they go to the theater, a museum, an exhibition, a concert, or the movies. A substantial portion had not done any of those things a single time in the past year. In particular, 14.2 percent had not attended the theater once in the past twelve months. About half had gone to the theater once (21.6 percent) or two to three times (30.1 percent). The respondents

go to a movie theater even less often: 20 percent did not go a single time in the past twelve months; 40.5 percent went once or two to three times. One out of four respondents (25.1 percent) had not gone to a concert once in the past year; about half had gone to a concert either once (27 percent) or two to three times (22.1 percent). While the teachers go to museums and exhibits somewhat more frequently, 9.4 percent did not go once in the past twelve months; 18.3 percent and 25.1 percent, respectively, went either once or two to three times.

To determine teachers' sense of social well-being, they were asked how satisfied they are with their lives as a whole. A total of 44.6 percent found it difficult to answer; 41.5 percent said that they were more or less satisfied; and 13.9 percent said that they were mostly dissatisfied.

One of the crucial stages in the education reform was the conversion to the new system of financing. This conversion is closely linked to the system of normative per-capita school financing in the capital city. In Moscow, the conversion to the new pay system (NPS) has been going on quite rapidly. According to information from the Moscow Department of Education, by September 2012 all schools in the capital city are supposed to convert to it. A total of 80.3 percent of the Moscow teachers surveyed say that their schools have already converted.

Prior to the adoption of the new forms of financing, the situation in regard to schoolteachers' pay in Moscow was organized erratically. For example, depending on the level of qualification, the possession of an academic degree, a class advisor, gymnasium status, experiments in the school, and the existence of special-interest circles, the added pay for a Moscow teacher could be as much as 250 percent of the base pay. This was linked, first and foremost, to the fact that financing as calculated per single student in gymnasiums, lyceums, and education centers was higher than in the ordinary schools, by one and a half to two times. The purpose of the new pay system is to eliminate these discrepancies and to pay the teacher on the basis of actual results.

We cannot say unequivocally how the teachers' pay had changed because at the time of the survey (late 2011) final calculations were

not complete. Similar experience with the adoption of the new pay system in other regions provides evidence that teachers did not experience either a substantial increase or a substantial loss.

The teachers' material condition was studied using two indicators: the family's material condition and its dynamic. Respondents' assessment of changes in their lives over a particular period of time serves as quite a reliable indicator of their sense of social well-being.

For a major portion of respondents, their condition remained unchanged (44.7 percent). For almost one-third, their material condition improved to some extent (5.6 percent definitely improved and 23.3 percent somewhat improved). For about one-fifth, their condition worsened (15.1 percent became somewhat worse and 3.5 percent got substantially worse).

The material condition of Moscow's teachers, compared to teachers in Russia as a whole, is relatively good, judging by their answers. More than half the respondents (58.9 percent) reported that they had enough money to purchase durable goods. Still, quite a few are not satisfied with their material condition: 26.4 percent only have enough money to buy food and essentials. Only a very small percentage (4.5 percent) reported that they had no material difficulties.

An absolute majority of the teachers in Moscow are concerned about the problems of education reform. More than 90 percent discuss these problems with their colleagues and superiors. Half the respondents (49.8 percent) have a more or less negative attitude toward the reforms, and 25.1 percent are more or less positive, but only 2.9 percent are unequivocally positive about the reforms. Another 21.4 percent cannot yet decide what their opinion is.

When it comes to specific areas of the education reforms, only two out of six areas of education reform were given positive ratings by Moscow's teachers—the profilization of the upper grades and the new educational technologies. Judging from the survey data, the teachers give the worst ratings to the normative per-capita financing system and the Unified State Examination.

One important aspect of the reforms is its orientation toward raising the schoolteacher's independence. The teachers' opinions

are polarized in regard to whether their independence is increasing in the selection of programs, the content of instruction, and the methodologies of conducting classes, and the textbooks. A substantial portion think the reforms have no influence on changing their independence in dealing with these issues. A somewhat larger number of teachers think the reforms have resulted in a decline in their independence when it comes to the choice of textbooks, programs, and the content of instruction (a negative balance of positive and negative assessments). Regarding the content of instruction, there are slightly more positive assessments.

Another important aspect of independence is the ability to make pedagogical decisions routinely and promptly. The teaching community in Moscow does not yet have a fully formed opinion in regard to how the reforms are affecting their independence and responsibility.

Notes

1. *Obrazovanie Rossii-2002 (statisticheskii informatsionno-analiticheskii sbornik)*. (Moscow: Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, 2003); *Obrazovanie v Rossii-2008. Statisticheskii biulleten'* (Moscow, 2009).

2. *Ofitsial'nyi sait Moskovskoi statistiki*. Moscow.gks.ru.

3. Calculated on the basis of the data of *Obrazovanie v Rossii-2008. Statisticheskii biulleten'* (Moscow, 2009).

4. *Obrazovanie Rossii-2002 (statisticheskii informatsionno-analiticheskii sbornik)*. (Moscow: Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, 2003); *Obrazovanie v Rossii-2008. Statisticheskii biulleten'* (Moscow, 2009).