SCHOOL-TEACHERS IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE:
A SURVEY OF THE EPIGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE

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ABSTRACT

This article serves a double purpose. It aims at offering the most complete collection of epigraphical evidence concerning schoolmasters in the Roman empire, both in the Latin West and the Greek East. It also tackles the issue of the low social status of these educators. Both the Roman system of schooling, which did not draw too narrow a line between the various stages of education, as strategies of self-representation and the concept of 'differential equations' offered possibilities to schoolmasters to somehow escape the stigma of low birth and to proudly present themselves as self-sufficient members of the plebs media.

Introduction

Studies on Roman education and schools have paid sufficient attention to the figure of the ludimagister or schoolteacher. The image of the average teacher and his teaching methods are therefore known well enough: a man of lower social status who had to maintain himself in a schooling system, without any government interference whatsoever, amidst a large group of pupils (whose parents usually did not belong to the upper classes) to make his living. Didactic methods were practically completely based on imitation, rattling off lessons, and drill. Authority was often enforced by physical means.¹

¹ I owe many thanks to the anonymous referees of Acta Classica for their valuable remarks.

¹ For a recent survey of the figure of the Roman schoolteacher and his educational methods, see Laes 2006:109-18. Earlier collections of realia related to the practice of basic schools in the Roman Empire already in Marrou 1964:2.63-73 (rather brief); Bonner 1977:34-46, 115-45 and 165-88 for the most complete collection of realia (with attention to archaeological finds). Vössing 1997 – focussing on the African provinces – contains important new data for basic education throughout the whole Empire, as does Cribiore 2001 focussing on Greco-Roman Egypt. For a dissident
The history of education has always been a prolific branch of scholarship in ancient history. However, as in the case of other educational figures, some gaps in research on Roman schoolteachers remain. A survey of all attested inscriptions and papyrological evidence mentioning those teachers is still missing. In this contribution, I will deal with this gap in research by presenting a list of all attested schoolteachers in Greek and Latin inscriptions and papyri from the Roman Empire. Moreover, ancient historians have not paid too much attention to the way in which Roman parents coped with the fact that the education of their children was entrusted to social inferiors. For the latter problem, the sociological concept of 'differential equations', introduced into ancient history by S. Murnaghan and S. Joshel, and successfully applied by the same scholars, can be of great use. This concept is essentially about upgrading. That schoolteachers were sometimes frowned upon, confirms their being linked with a low social origin, and the disdain of the higher classes they met with on that account. On the other hand the very same teachers were, as it were, upgraded, as were also other educators of low status. Apparently, some people did not feel at ease with the idea that their children were being entrusted to the care of social outsiders. And there is also the possibility that these schoolteachers managed to upgrade their own profession, in the same way as they established themselves, by erecting inscriptions mentioning their profession as members of the plebs media, a class of people who were able to look after themselves, thanks to their salary, in a society where paid labour enjoyed low esteem in the eyes of the aristocratic upperclass.

Due to the small number of epigraphical sources, historians studying the regional history of one particular province often have to resort to extrapolation. Those who want to study the history of basic education in, for instance, the province of Pannonia Superior, can indeed consult specialised works, catalogues with enumerations of school material that were found there (often stilii or wax tablets), archaeological finds that could indicate the presence of a school, or graffiti and inscriptions that inform us on the matter opinion on basic education in Rome as mainly a slave business, see publications by Booth 1979 and 1981.

2 Joshel & Murnaghan 1998. As such, this paper is part of an ongoing project that collects the inscriptions for midwives, pedagogues and schoolteachers, and that pays attention to the differential equations concept. For a similar study on Roman midwives, including both the aspect of discourse and a list of all attested epigraphical cases, see my The Educated Roman Midwife. An example of 'differential equations' (forthcoming in the acts of the 12th Hippocratic conference, held in Leyden, August 2005). On pedagogues, see Laes 2004 and Laes 2008.

3 Veyne 2001 is a fundamental study on the plebs media.
of literacy. But for the organisation of school life, the authors always refer to general works on education in Antiquity due to the lack of concrete material from ‘their own’ province.\textsuperscript{4} This, by the way, is methodologically sound. The homogeneity in the form and organisation of education in the whole of the Roman Empire was striking and followed the rhythm of Romanisation. Into the farthest corners of the Empire participation in the \textit{paideia} implied participation in the culture of the happy few. Everywhere the same teaching methods were being used and the same texts were being worked on. In all provinces basic education was distinguished from higher forms of education taught by grammarians or rhetors. Data on richly illustrated territories like Africa and Egypt can therefore indeed be transposed to other areas.\textsuperscript{5}

For those who are looking for epigraphical or papyrological documentation on \textit{indicagogi} and their pupils in the Imperium Romanum the situation is as follows.\textsuperscript{6} The Greek East was never investigated systematically. Our research based on \textit{SEG} will be the first in this respect. No testimonies are found in the provinces Britannia, Germania, Noricum and Raetia. Gallia, mainly, has a lot of Late Antiquity material, invariably referring to higher education (Haarhoff 1920 and Coulon 1994). For the Danube provinces one can refer to Tudor’s (1965) and Bilkei’s (1983) articles. The Spanish provinces and Lusitania have been studied by Stanley (1991).\textsuperscript{7} For the African provinces, we have Vössing (1997), whereas for Egypt the works of Cribiore (1996 and 2001) are indispensable.\textsuperscript{8}

\textbf{The social profile of schoolteachers}

In order to come to a better understanding of the social background of the basic schoolteachers, it is necessary to assemble the scant and scattered sources in the different provinces. Oddly enough, there has been no such research yet – we only have studies about schoolmasters in separate provinces. We also have scant information on payment of schoolteachers.

\textsuperscript{4} Exemplary is Thury 2003:9-11 on Carnuntum. Coulon 1994:109-32 is different, containing a number of gravestones and typical texts from Late Antiquity (Ausonius) for Gallia.


\textsuperscript{6} In this research we did not use merely iconographical depictions of possible pupils and schoolteachers. For a couple of examples from Gallia see Coulon 1994:110-23.

\textsuperscript{7} For a \textit{status questionis} on research on education per province see Vössing 1997:11-14.

\textsuperscript{8} See Cribiore 1996:161-70 for a list of all papyrologically attested teachers, from pedagogues to rhetors.
This information points to a low salary. According to Horace, a salary of eight *asses* a month for each pupil would be the standard payment. The eight months of teaching in a year would imply a mere four *denarii* a year per pupil, whereas a labourer could make one *denarius* a day.9 The emperor Diocletian’s Price Edict (301 AD) is another important source for teachers’ payment.10 However, the Edict only mentions maximum prices which could be asked by vendors or labourers in return for their provision of services. Besides, the Edict tried to cope with an economical crisis due to a strong devaluation, and hardly produced any effect. For educational tasks, the text mentions the following wages in *denarii* per pupil per month (*in singulis puерis menstruos*) (Ed. de Pretiis 7.65-72):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Wage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pedagogus</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>magistro institutori literarum</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>calculatores</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>notario</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>librarium sive antiquarium</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grammatico Graeco sive Latino et geometricae</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advocato sive iuris perito mercedis in posulatione</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in cognitione</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>architecno magistro</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The low payment of schoolteachers is indeed conspicuous: lower than any other educator, with the exception of pedagogues. Even those who taught technical matters, such as counting, stenography or clerical skills (*calculatores, notarii* and *librarii*), are far better off.11 In practice, the living standard of schoolteachers strongly depended on personal circumstances, such as the number of pupils, the material well-being of parents and their willingness to pay, as well as unpredictable events such as illness or death of students.12 There was also the possibility of receiving occasional gifts *in natura*, such as the Minerval during the Minerva celebration from the 19th to the 23rd of March, or the yearly *nrependitium* which consisted of meat.13 Due to their low

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9 Hor. *Sat.* 1.6.75 (Horace, however, is talking about a small town, and satiric exaggeration must be taken into account). See Bonner 1977:149-50.
10 See the edition with commentary by Lauffer 1971. See also Harris 1989:308.
11 For comparison with daily wages of manual labourers, see *Ed. de Pretiis* 7.1-66. A stoneworker earns 50 *denarii*, a mosaic worker 60, a painter of walls 70, a woodworker 50.
13 CGL 5.605: *Nrependitium: annuale priuminum quod certo tempore rstiti dominii vel discipuli dotoribus offerre solent dominio suum carnem et porcellum.*
payment, schoolteachers were possibly obliged to perform other tasks during summer vacations or in the afternoons, such as the writing of wills. Contrary to other teachers such as rhetoricians or grammarians, schoolteachers were hardly ever exempted from taxes or municipal duties.

_Ludimagistri_ in Latin inscriptions

A search through the epigraphical _corpora_ of the Western Empire leads to no more than twelve testimonies on _ludimagistri_. No inscriptions for _magistri_ have been included in the lists. Usually this general term does not refer to a schoolteacher: it could well be a master teaching a craft or higher forms of education.

The most elaborate description is found in the metrical inscription for schoolteacher Furius Philocalus from Aurunca. His _nomen_ points to possible Greek origin, probably belonging to the Greek community of this town in southern Italy. The inscription explicitly states that he treated his pupils with the greatest respect (which is an explicit refutation of sexual accusations that _ludimagistri_ had to face every once in a while) and mentions his extra income as a writer of testaments:

_P[a]rce pudensque vixit omni tempore,_  
_Auruncus era[t], Fu[r]ius erat nomine_  
_magister ludi litterari Philocalus_  
_summa quom castitate in discipulos suos,_  
_idemque testamenta scrisit cum fide nec_

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14 See _CLE_ 9; _CIL_ 2.1734 about _a testamentarius_. See also Petron. _Sat._ 46.
15 An exception for schoolteachers in an edict by king Ptolemaeus Philadelphus in Egypt (3rd century BC): _P. Hal._ 1.260-65. See Cebiore 1996:21 and 2001:62. For Roman times, see also _Dig._ 50.4.11.4 (Eos, qui primum litteras pueros inducit, non habere vacacionem divus Magnus Antoninus rescriptum) and _Dig._ 50.5.2.8 (Qui puero primas litteras docent, immunitatem a civilibus non habenti sed ne cui eorum id quod supra sive sic indicatur, ad praesidis religionem pertinet, sive in civitatibus sive in vicis primas litteras docant) for possible exceptions. In the Lusitanian mining district of Vipasca, _ludimagistri_ were however granted exemption: _ILS_ 6891 (Lex metalli Vipascensis: Ludi magistros a procuratore metaluum immunes esse placet). For a possible plea for the education of children supplied by cities, see Apollonius of Tyana, _Ep._ 54 and Wes 1981:199. For grammarians and rhetoricians being exempted, see Marrou 1964:2.110-11; Kaster 1988:227-27 and Harris 1989:235.
16 Frasca 1999:129 for the term _magister_. A list of _magistri_ from Rome can be found in Riess 2001:204-05. For clear cases of _magistri_ in this list who were not schoolteachers, see _CIL_ 6.8981 (_magister iatrikptis pueros_); _CIL_ 6.10 008; _CIL_ 6.10 013; _CIL_ 6.10 017; _CIL_ 6.33 930. For teachers in the crafts see Frasca 1999:149-58.
Two Late Antique inscriptions from Rome mention a venue that was reserved for the teaching of a *ludimagister*. An inscription from *Centum Cellae* is probably Christian. From *Amiteraum* we know about a schoolteacher with the status of a freedman:


(CIL 9.4226)

A teacher from *Dyrrachium* (Macedonia) was freed or freeborn:

L(ucius) Etereius/ magister/ ludei/ have

(AE 1994, 1575)

Scarbantia (Pannonia Superior) has interesting evidence in store: a *legio XV* veteran who took up the task of schoolteacher. Due to financial benefits, veterans certainly enjoyed wealth. The presence of a number of veterans probably increased the population’s demand for education – a situation also attested for the Spanish Tritium or the Italian Venusia. Cotonius, possibly, seized the opportunity to teach children of his former brothers in arms.

17 CIL 6.9529 (ILCV 717): [Locus ...] magistri ludi litterariorum/ ...]. The inscription dates from 516 or 525. See also CIL 6.9530 (ILCV 718): [...magistri ludi/ [...] magister/ [...] depositus/ [...] consuli].

18 CIL 11.3568 (ILCV 718): Hic requiescit Melleus/ magister ludii/ amicus amicorum/ qui visit annos XXX/ depositus/ surnudo die V Id(s) Julio. Requeceit [...].

19 The entry in AE mentions an Albanian study on this inscription, but does not elaborate upon the rare *nomen* Etereius, which might point to Greek origin (the Greek name Aetherius).

20 For Tritium: Fear 1995:65. For Venusia: Hor. Serm. 1.6.72-75. See also Bilkei 1982:72 on the army’s interest in education and literacy, as it was in need of secretaries. The phenomenon of teaching foreign recruits in the army is well known. Polliones were *Bildungsoffiziere* who taught soldiers to understand commands given in Latin. See Dietz 1985. See also Stauner 2004:132-38 about *librarii* and 214-18 about literacy in the Roman army.
[L(ucius)] C[oe]tonius/ G(ai) f(ilius) Pol(lia) Cam/panus vet(erenus)/ leg(ionis) XV Apol(linaris)/ mag(ister) lud(i)/ ann(orum) LXXVII/ h(ic) s(itus) e(st)/ Coton(ia) Prima/ L(ucio) con(iugi) et/ sib(la) viva f(ecit).
(RIU 1.185, r. 1-10).

C. Marcius Celer also came from Pannonia. Just like Cotonius Campanus, he possibly came from northern Italy.\(^{21}\) He mentions his skills in teaching the Greek language.

_\begin{align*}
\text{C. Marci/us } \text{f.} \& \text{ Ce/} \text{cet/ praec(ceptor) Gr(aecus)/ an(norum) L h(ic) s(itus)/ Pompoeia/ Q. f. Re/spec/ta sibi et con(iugi v(onum) f(ecit).}
\end{align*}_
\text{(CIL 3.10 805).}

We also have two testimonies from the African provinces.\(^{22}\) In the small village of Sidi Ali el-Fergiani near Leptis (Tripolitania), a village teacher proudly mentions his Latin name and that of his wife, whose Punic name he also mentions.

_\begin{align*}
\text{[U]l]piae Rogati/l[a]/ Arisuth Mather/ L(ucius) Canuleius Verna ludi/ mag(ister) uxor(i) carissimae/ f(ecit).}
\end{align*}_
\text{(IRT 850).}

His cognomen does not necessarily imply servile origin.\(^{23}\) Neither should we consider this inscription as proof of radical Romanisation ignoring every trace of autochthonous culture; both the Roman and the Punic names are used. The inscription is a unique testimony of Romanisation through education in the villages. Undoubtedly this schoolteacher enjoyed a certain esteem in his environment as the carrier of Roman culture.\(^{24}\)

An inscription from Carthage is too fragmented to offer more information.\(^{25}\)

From the village of Sour Ghozlan near Auzia (Mauretania) we learn about the 25-year-old _didactus_ Axius Victorius (CIL 8.9088): the unusual

\(^{21}\) Bilkei 1982:71. However, the _cognomen_ Campanus does not invariably refer to original provenance. See Doudin-Payre & Raepsaez-Charlier 2001: s.v.

\(^{22}\) Vössing 1997:560 n. 1895 on _magistri_ from Africa who are erroneously considered teachers.

\(^{23}\) See for instance _CIL_ 11.7599 for a freeborn person with the _cognomen_ Verna.

\(^{24}\) Vössing 1997:87, 559.

indication of his profession may indicate a certain pride in his knowledge of the Greek language.26

We can also mention a Late Antique inscription from Iomnium, a fairly insignificant town on the coast of Mauretania Caesariensis:

Domitio Rufino magistro liberalium litterarum/ homini bono/ v(ixit)
aniis LXXV.

(ILS 7762)

According to Vössing, the simple vocabulary (magistro ... litterarum) does not allow this to be a ‘real’ grammarian: here we already deal with a category inbetween schoolteacher and grammarian.27

Finally, we have a family from Late Antiquity (father and son) assuming the task of schoolteacher (magister puerorum) in Italian Parentium, making a donation to the local basilica:28

Clamosus magister puerorum et Successa p(edes) C.

(I. It. 10.2.58 = ILCV 719,1,2)

Clamosus magister puerorum et Victorina f(ecerunt) p(edes) CXI.

(I. It. 10.2.74)

Schoolteachers in Greek inscriptions and papyri

The difficulties of finding ‘unambiguous’ schoolteachers are greater for Greek inscriptions than for Latin ones. The terms διδάσκαλος, γραμματο-διδάσκαλος and γραμματιστὴς are often ambiguous. Sometimes honorary decrees call a rhetor διδάσκαλος so that one always has to take into consideration the whole context of an inscription before classifying a teacher under a certain type of education.29

26 Vössing 1997:559, 566.
28 Harris 1989:309 remarks that the nom parant ‘shouter’ is hardly likely to allude to schoolteachers shouting at their pupils, as mentioned in Martial, Ep. 5.84.1-2.
29 Harris 1983:97 and 1989:235 on the ambiguity of the term that could also refer to a grammarian, a rhetor, or a Christian catechist. Examples of a rhetor or higher teacher: IG 4.449 (see also Harris 1983:97 n. 43). Whether Severus, winner of a music contest (SEG 49.1330), or a διδάσκαλος mentioned in a pyrrhich dance contest (SEG 48.896), were really schoolteachers is impossible to decide. The term is, for instance, also used for teachers of ephebes (SEG 39.187 120) or for teachers in synagogues (SEG 29.636). In papyri the term is never used to refer to an elementary schoolteacher (Cribiore 2001:51).
In a small village in a remote corner of Arabia an inscription mentions the construction of a basilica, financed by the metrokometes and by Αὐρος Θέμος διδάσκαλος, the local community's schoolteacher. Education in Pontic villages was very likely only basic education. Even though Publius Tattius Rufus from Tarsus calls himself γραμματικὸς his teaching in the Zelitides mountain villages was probably limited to elementary reading and writing skills. In the 3rd century BC the teacher (διδάσκαλος) Glaucias of Kallatis emigrated to the Pontian Mesambria. The village of Busra-el-Hariri in southern Syria introduces us to the village teacher Oaedos. Also from Syria (Saccaca-Maximiniapolis in Thrachonitis), M. Aurelius Sentius Maior, a legio III Cyrenaica veteran, refers to himself as the ‘son of devout teachers’ (διδασκαλόν εὐσεβῶν ὁλός). The Losta or Zosta site, little more than a hamlet in the Isaurian Kodylessus territory (Asia Minor), has an inscription of a Christian teacher Eugraphius for his son. In Phrygian Altintas we find an inscription for the schoolteacher Aurelius Trophimus. The Christian διδάσκαλος John came from a 5th or 6th century Cappadocian village.

The evidence from larger cities in Asia Minor is limited: only Termessus, Miletopolis, Xanthus and Alabanda have inscriptions for teachers. Alabanda shows us two generations of schoolteachers. An honorary decree from

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30 SEG 41.1593 (2nd/3rd century).
31 Studia Pontica 3.1.276. For commentary see EA 13 (1989) 72. The same is said of the rhetor and poet Severus who in fact taught in a village in the Amaia region: Studia Pontica 3.1.145a. According to EA 13 (1989) 72 even Maximus, γραμματικὴς ἐπιστορὰς τέχνης (GV 1184) from Sebastopolis was a grammarian who also had to teach basic education.
32 SEG 45.870 (IG BnθΓ1 307 bis 1,307 2nd ed.).
33 Macadam 1983:114 = SEG 33,1248 = Le Bas Waddington 3.2472.
34 IGRR 3.1193. His father's name was Zenodorus. Maybe the family had a tradition of teachers.
36 SEG 6.137, v. 5: τὸν σοφίαν ἐμὲ διδάσκαλον. The man was most likely not a Christian. Four generations of his family are known; see also JRS 17 (1927) 55.
37 SEG 27.950.
38 The testimonials are collected by Harris 1983:97. Termessus: TAM 3.439 (Aurelius Hermiaion Moleus for his deceased wife, two children who are still alive and two more relatives). Miletopolis: GV 1182. Magnus is honoured as ἦν Μοῖσαι, τὸν ἐν σοφίῃ κλήτων ἄνδρα / ἐξ οἷα Ὀμηρῶν ἀδιάφανος σέλεσθαι (v. 1-2), but at the same time he taught the first basic elements of reading and writing to πρώτος ὑπό μετέρως ὑπάρχῃ ἐγένετο λόγων (v. 8). The possibility remains, however, that the λόγοι actually refer to verses of Homer or the first lines of the Iliad. Xanthus: IGRR 3.632 = TAM 2.315 (heroōn for Aurelius Prytanicus διδάσκαλος).
Delphi mentions the γραμματικός Leucius Likionus Euclides (1st century AD). As an Athenian immigrant he had taken care of the education of immigrants' children in Delphi, and had also assumed the task of providing basic education for the younger children.39

Finally one can point to the scant unambiguous evidence from Roman Egypt. In the Isis temple at Philae a man does a proskunéma for his teacher-slave Kabatas and his own child Korax.40 In the year 108, a schoolteacher had a wall of a Leto temple restored at his own expense.41 In papyri we meet teachers who offer their services as writers.42

Upgrading of schoolteachers?

It needs to be pointed out immediately that expressions of appreciation for schoolteachers are scarce and certainly not as explicit as in the discourses on midwives, nurses and pedagogues. There is, for instance, no central text that applauds the ideal schoolteacher and that highlights his crucial role in education. There is, however, an elaborate negative discourse.43 ‘Your father was a schoolteacher’ was a topos of ancient eloquence for ridiculing the opponent, and for stressing his humble descent (the Suda reference stating that Callimachus used to be a village schoolteacher is also part of this tradition).44 Ἡ τεθυμένῃ ἡ διδάσκει γράμματα is a saying that aptly summarises this contempt.45 One of the standard reproaches regarding teachers was that they spent their days in the soot of oil lamps and in dirt.46 They are denounced for their cruelty. This tradition continues uninterruptedly from Martial (Ep. 9.62) to an anonymous 6th century mock epigram by a poet who lived and worked in Carthage under Vandal reign. An incompetent teacher assumes the task of teaching the alphabet to his pupils. As he

Alabanda: Le Bas-Waddington 3.582, 586 (for the schoolteacher Gennadius Nerus) and 587 (for Nerus, father of Gennadius).

40 SEG 40.1542 (SB 4099): καὶ πεποίηται τὸ προσκύνημα Καβάτατος τοῦ διδασκάλου μου καὶ παιδός καὶ Κόρακος τοῦ παιδίου ἐμοῦ.
42 Cribiore 1996:22 n. 82.
43 Cambi 1999:172-74 on the devaluation of the figure of the magister.
45 Com. Aesp. 20 = FGC 4.698, 375.
cannot instil into his pupils enough fear to keep them disciplined, and as he refrains from using the whip, his pupils throw their wax tablets around in the classroom, turning his lessons into a real ‘game’ (v. 6: *Ian nomen ludis rite magister habet*).47 ‘Paedophile’ traits are also attributed to them. Juvenal and Martial mention one (Hamillus. According to Juvenal it is difficult to offer a list of *quot discipulos inclinat Hamillus*, while Martial describes how the man likes to be caught with *grandes* to avoid being accused of pederasty.48

One can suspect a certain professional pride in the inscriptions that schoolteachers had erected for themselves or that were made for them. Certainly, in the more remote areas the schoolteacher must have been the key figure in the introduction to the world of ancient *paideia*, however rudimentary this introduction might have been in our eyes (cf. the village teachers attested to in Greek and Latin inscriptions). It takes but little imagination to see how the villager must have looked up at this educator, who also offered his services as a writer to the great number of (quasi-) illiterates for filling out official documents. As late as the early 20th century this kind of task was fulfilled by teachers in Western European country villages, where, due to their writing skills, they enjoyed a certain esteem among the population.49 Moreover, it would be wrong to think that the teacher only taught reading, writing and calculating. Literature – be it on an elementary level – was offered too, as were mythology and fables. On a basic level the objective was to introduce people to the wisdom proper to a *vir literatus*.50 A valuable insight of why a person might choose teaching as a career is offered in pseudo-Florus’ *Vergilius orator an poet.* However, the narrator is well aware of the fact that his preference for teaching children is

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47 *Anth. Lat.* 1.96 (ed. Riese). See Vössing 1997:368-69 (‘Das Gedicht könnte, was den Inhalt angeht, ebensogut im Rom des 1. Jahrhundert n. Chr. entstanden sein.’) and Sluiter 1988:53. See also *Anth. Lat.* 1.294 (ed. Riese) on a grammarian fulfilling his task *et manu et teto ... crentus* (v. 6) (the poet Luxurius also lives in Vandal Carthage in the 6th century).


50 Vössing 1997:367-68 refers to August, *Conf.* 1.13.20 and 1.9.15 where apart from *scribere, legere et numerare* also *cogitare de litteris* is mentioned as typical of elementary education. See in this respect also Tertull. *Idol.* 10.1.
not shared by many of his fellow citizens, and it takes him some time to realise the beauty of the job.\textsuperscript{51}

On a more structural level the organisation of the Roman educational system offered opportunities for the upgrading of schoolteachers and ‘differential equations’ with their higher colleagues, the grammarians. The existence of the strict three-degree system (\textit{ludimagister} – \textit{grammaticus} – \textit{rhetor}) was contested by Booth (1979 & 1981). He feels a two-track system was more likely. Only slaves and pupils of low descent were educated by the \textit{ludimagistri}. Next to that, there was a system for upper-class pupils. They started their school career with the grammarian. This grammarian also offered basic education, unless they had already received that basis from a home teacher. After completing their study with the grammarian, pupils could continue with the rhetor.\textsuperscript{52} More recent publications have in turn adjusted Booth’s insights. In a fundamental article Kaster collected a number of passages that undeniably indicate the existence of the three-track system, which in no way implies that every single student systematically followed these three stages.\textsuperscript{53} On the other hand, a considerable amount of Late Antique passages point to the fact that the grammarian offered the first forms of school education.\textsuperscript{54} But these texts were mainly written in \textit{metropoleis}. Kaster’s conclusions are nuanced: the three-track system was certainly not the regular form of educational organisation in the Roman world and the distinctions between \textit{ludimagistri} and \textit{grammatici} are often not very sharp. But there isn’t any conclusive evidence for the existence of a two-track system during the Empire either. Only one conclusion is possible: depending on the local needs, there were different coexisting systems and forms. Indeed, in an educational system with hardly any government interference at all, this need not come as a surprise. Variation and adaptation


\textsuperscript{52} Kaster 1983:338 remarks that the state’s complete neglect of basic education could be used in the defence of Booth’s theses.

\textsuperscript{53} Kaster 1983:325-29.

\textsuperscript{54} Kaster 1983:329-36. In this way the terms \textit{grammatai} and \textit{litterator} could also refer to grammarians: see Booth 1981. See also Harris 1989:234 (‘men who called themselves \textit{grammatici} sometimes taught plain reading and writing’).
in the function of local needs are therefore accepted by Vossing, who also indicates that the three-track system does not have to be rejected at all. There are testimonies until Late Antiquity pointing out that upper-class Romans had also gone through these educational phases. According to Harris 'it is only in fact from the second century A.D. that the sequence litterator – grammaticus – rhetor becomes visible.'

To summarise, one could state that the merging of the tasks of the ludimagistri and grammatici offered upgrading opportunities for those who were involved in basic education: teachers take over the grammarian’s task and prestige, and grammarians take care of elementary education. In the epigraphical evidence we have already pointed out the ambiguous character of the terms. Those who boasted about being a cultivated grammarian, in practice often dealt with elementary education as well. Teachers, on the other hand, who, mainly in the remote villages, were the sole carriers of antique paideia, offered more than a simple introduction into reading, writing and calculating. One could state that in a number of cases teachers benefited from the (nonetheless also limited) fame of the grammarian’s profession.

Grammarians took care of elementary education. Thanks to Ausonius’ cycle, the prestigious Bordeaux school of rhetors is well known to us (one somewhat anachronistically talks of the ‘professors’ of this ‘university’). There would most likely have been a hierarchy in this school, in which one started a teaching career as a grammarian (which could also include elementary education). In the best possible case, one could end one’s career as a rhetor. At least two of these ‘professors’ are known to have offered basic education as well, even though one should add that Ausonius’ description is anything but favourable. Remarkable, though, is a passage from the Protrepticus ad nepotem, in which Ausonius addresses his grandson,

55 Vossing 1997:563-74. Quoted as evidence in favour of the three-track-system are Apuleius, Flor. 20.2; August. Conf. 2.3.5 and 5.18.4 (Vossing 1997:567-72 on Augustine’s career as evidence for the existence of the three-steps system). Vossing concludes from Macarius, Hom. 15.42 (PG 34.604) that people of high social status took basic education as well.


58 Auson. Prof. 10.36-37 (qui rudibus pueris/ prima elementa docebat) but also note the complement in vv. 38-41: doctrina exigus/ moribus implacatis/ proinde, ut erat meritum,/famam habuit tenuem. See also Auson. Prof. 21.4-6: qui primaevos fandique rudes/ elementorum prima docebas/ signa novorum. Here, too, the sting is in the tail: the ‘schoolteacher’ turns out to be a drunkard: creditus olim fervere mero,/ ut Vergilii Flaccique locis/ aemula fortes.
speaking of his own experience with education. In the text we encounter a successful rhetoric professor assuming the air of a foster mother (vv. 67-68), schoolteacher (v. 69), grammarian (vv. 70-72) and rhetor (vv. 73-75). No contempt resounds at any stage, every phase is approached with interest and tenderness.

67 multos lactantibus annis
ipse alui gremioque £ovens et murmura solvens
tripui tenerum blandis nutricibus aevum.

70 Mox pueros moll monitu et formidine leni
pellexi, ut mites peterent per acerba profectus,
carptuni dulcem fractum radicis amarae.
Idem vesticipes motu iam puberis aevi
ad mores artesque bonus fanrique vigorem
produx.

Ausonius presents his education as a mixture of moderate strictness and a friendly attitude towards children. The milk and friendliness of the nutrix is replaced by the milk of the learning process and the kind teacher. This image is not only found in Ausonius' works: the education of the cultural elite is presented as the transition from liquid to solid food, a natural and benevolent process.  

Admittedly, the professor Ausonius speaks here as a grandfather, who took care of his grandson almost from his birth. Such a testimony tells us little about what went on in ordinary towns and villages – it is, however, a sign of appreciation of elementary education as well as an indication of the fact that scholars sometimes did teach elementary reading and writing skills.

As mentioned above, the mechanism works in the other direction as well: teachers taking over the grammarian’s task. No poet has been associated more with the grammarian’s education than Vergil. But Orosius stresses that he learnt his Vergil thoroughly with the schoolteacher (note the use of the term instrum): Ludi litterarii disciplina nostrae quoque memoriae instrum est (Adv. pag. 1.18.1).

This enables us to understand some of the rare eulogies for the schoolteacher. Indeed, in such eulogies, authors tend to tell us what should be done or thought. Their praises do not necessarily correspond to reality, but are interesting for the discourse level. In general terms Seneca states that

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teachers (praeceptores) are entitled to our affection (caritas) and our respect (reverentia). We cannot exclude the possibility that he refers to elementary schoolteachers as well. Apuleius considers education with the litterator as a building brick for a literary career. When he addresses his fellow townsmen, he claims to honour them as his parents and teachers. Augustine thinks we should make a distinction between the schoolteachers (magistri) and the pedagogy; the latter are to be feared, the former to be honoured. A Roman terracotta sculpture probably points in the same direction: a schoolteacher is surrounded by a group of pupils who gather round him, almost as if finding shelter under his cloak. Finally we need to refer to the discourse that puts teachers on the same level as parents. After his long account on the first education with nurses, teachers and grammarians, Quintilian states that children should ideally love their educators as much as their parents. This statement seems more appropriate regarding grammarians, since they invariably dedicated their works to learned friends, patrocinio or students. And former students adopted the imagery of closeness and familiarity by dedicating reverential epitaphs, or by giving funerary speeches for their deceased teachers. Even though the topos is usually reserved for grammarians, it is not impossible that Quintilian also refers to schoolteachers.

Therefore a confrontation of epigraphical material with the well-known literary texts and clichés on Roman schoolteachers finally leads to a nuanced image. Indeed, they had to fight hard to make ends meet, and their social status was often not enviable. But still, in ancient status society, they tried to make the best of it. Quite often the aura of literacy offered them a certain esteem in the local community: the proud inscriptions are a proof of this. But the literary discourse, too, made way for a certain upgrading, an

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61 Sen. De Ben. 6.15. The expressions of affection and respect quoted by Rawson 2003:179-80 are always related to grammarians or rhetors.
62 Apul. Flor. 20.2 and Flor. 18.18 (semper adae et ubique ves quippe st parentis ac menos primos magistrius celebres); August. De Util. Cred. 3.9.
63 Louvre museum: M. Chuzelle N 4648 – depicted in Cribiore 2001:60. According to Schulze 1998:44 this would be a pedagogue with several children under his care.
64 Quint. 2.9.1-2: ut praeceptores non minus quam ipsa studia ament, et parentes esse non quidem corporum sed munium credit.
appreciation that one can also find in the discourse on other educational figures: midwives, pedagogues and to a greater extent grammarians.

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**Epigraphical and papyrological evidence**

| AE | L’Année Epigraphique |
| CIL | Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum |
| EA | Epigraphica Anatolica |
| FD | Fouilles de Delphes. III. Epigraphie |
| GV | W. Peek, *Griechische Vers-Inscriften I. Grab-Epigramm* (Berlijn 1955) |
| IG | Inscriptiones Graecae |
| IG Bulg | Inscriptiones Graecae in Bulgaria repertae |
| IGRR | Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes |
| ILCV | Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres |
| ILTun. | Inscriptions latines de la Tunisie |
| IRT | Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania |

|MAMA | Monumenta Asiae Minoris |
| RIU | Die römische Inschriften Ungarns |
| SB | Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten |

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66 Full bibliographical references are easily traced down in epigraphical handbooks or on the internet [http://epigraphy.packhum.org/inscriptions/main?url=bib].
SEG
Studia Pontica
TAM

Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum
Studia Pontica, III. Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines du Pont et de l'Arménie.
Tituli Asiae Minoris

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