

VALUES OF EDUCATION IN EUROPE AFTER WORLD WAR I IN NEWLY CREATED COUNTRIES – EXAMPLE OF LATVIA

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Abstract. *The First World War (1914 - 1918) strengthened the idea of self-determination of nations in Europe, while the end of the war created favourable conditions for the creation of new states, including the proclamation of the Republic of Latvia on November 18, 1918. The creation of an independent Latvia State for the first time gave an opportunity to create an education system based on national interests. As a result, the Latvia education system during the period from 1919 to 1934 was transformed according to socioeconomic and political changes, creating for the first time a national education system based on the innovative pedagogical ideas of the given era. Basically, during the period of Latvia's first free state, in the democratic regime, the education system, in compliance with trends in Europe, was dominated by reform pedagogy. The purpose of the article is, based on the content analysis of periodicals and historical sources, to identify the existing values of Latvia education (school pedagogy) during the democratic period from 1919 to 1934, in the context of European educational values. As a result of the theoretical research, based on the content analysis of periodicals and historical sources, the following educational values have been identified as the most important: creativity; discipline; obedience of students; kindness; humility; individualization; personality of the teacher; professional mastery of the teacher; love of the fatherland.*

Keywords: *educational system, history, school, students, teacher, values.*

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Introduction

The period of the first free state of the Republic of Latvia can be considered as a time of change in education, it is the time of the creation of a new national state, when the foundations of the state system and including the education system were laid. International trends in education, ideas of local intellectuals and pride in the creation of an independent country change the public attitude towards the education sector as a whole, emphasizing the need for society to get involved in the formation of education policy in order to jointly build a democratic, European and developed country. During the first decades of the 20th century, a considerable amount of new pedagogic trends emerge, which are positioned against the existing education system - the pedagogical process in the concept of existing education is not centred around the human individuality and development of consciousness, therefore the newly introduced trends are considered suitable for the era and recognized as the only scientific ones (Anspaks, 2003). It should be noted that the higher education sector also experienced a rapid boom, with an increase in the number of students, which was proportionally one of the highest indicators in Europe, higher educational establishments and classical universities of various specializations were founded, allocating significant state funding to higher education and science (Zids, 2019). Moreover, the rapid growth of democracy was stopped by the coup d'état organized by Karlis Ulmanis on May 15, 1934, when as a result the parliamentary state system collapsed and the democratic value system was replaced by the features characteristic of an authoritarian regime, including changing educational values (Jurs & Pelnena, 2022). Along with the era, educational values also change, they transform according to socio-economic and political changes, thus educational

values and their transformation are a topical and important prerequisite for the development of the country. The purpose of the article is, based on theoretical research - analysis of periodicals and historical sources, to identify the existing values of Latvia education (school pedagogy) in the democratic regime during the period from 1919 to 1934.

Existing Educational Values in Student Learning

The First World War, along with the geopolitical and military results, created a peculiar and unique ideological atmosphere in the world, placing the peoples' right to self-determination in the centre of attention, it has influenced the destinies of multiple nations and created conditions for the foundation of new countries in Europe, including the solemn proclamation of the Republic of Latvia on November 18, 1918 (Bleiere, 2005). The territory of Latvia also suffered significantly due to the war. However, paradoxically, the devastating war gave the peoples of Eastern Europe hope for a better future (National History Museum of Latvia, 2023). Even though the initial stage of the formation of Latvia was still very complicated (during the period from 1918 to 1920 the Freedom Struggle took place), shortly after the proclamation, on December 8, 1919, the law on Latvian educational institutions was adopted, which determined the general compulsory free education in the mother tongue (Compendium of Laws and Ordinances, 1919). The importance and value of education at this stage is valued very highly, indicating that industry in post-war Latvia will not reach a high level for a long time, therefore a human being is considered as the direct source of Latvia's prosperity (Dreimanis, 1921). Nevertheless, at the same time, the school attendance in the first years of the country's existence was often difficult for children and their parents, since the shortage caused by the war, as well as the need for children to do various jobs on their parents' or others' farms, prevented the possibility of successfully combining it with school attendance. Even though there was a threat of punishment for deliberately not sending children to school, sanctions against parents were hardly ever implemented (Staris & Usins, 2000).

The formation of the Latvia state for the first time provided an opportunity to create an education system that is based on national interests and rich in progressive pedagogic knowledge. As P. Dreimanis emotionally states in the monthly newsletter of the Ministry of Education: "The future of a free Latvia is in its youth. It is our duty to find a way for the youth's development, to organize such a unit school where it could find the most useful material for its own activities - upbringing. Self-activity has been the basis of what the Latvian people have achieved so far, self-activity in schools will ensure successful development in the future: citizens will grow up, capable of self-determination, creating an independent life" (Dreimanis, 1921, 120). Describing the educational values of the previous period, i.e., the period of the Russian Empire, A. Dauge points out that until now, at the end of school, the youth were basically required to have acquired a certain amount of knowledge and that the students had certain skills to perform mechanical work. The following were mentioned as the tasks of the school in relation to the students: (I) help the new generation adapt to the natural and cultural conditions of the surroundings; (II) learn the cultural performances of previous generations; (III) implemented the ideals of society in life (Zalitis, 1920). In the learning process, individualization is strengthened as one of the most important educational values. In the context of upbringing and pedagogy, the uniqueness of each personality is actively emphasized (Students, 1998 (1933)), and as the basis of quality upbringing and pedagogy, the absorption into the personality of each child and young person is mentioned: "We must not carelessly measure all children with one measure (..) we must study the individuality of each" (Barbins, 1926, 12). In this context, the importance of

working with students who have learning and behavioural difficulties is also highlighted: “At school, not all children are equally well-educated. Some are more organized than others. Some are more attentive, more obedient, quickly perceive everything, do their work neatly and with their behaviour seemingly help the teacher; while the others are even difficult to deal with (..) It is natural that the teacher's affinities are on the first side, while with the others the teacher leads a constant battle, even applying all kinds of punishments, which understandably help little and make the guilty even worse” (Zigure, 1926, 3).

Values such as obedience, kindness, humility and love are described as important in the development of a child's personality, citing as the main argument that children are extremely important for the development of the country and society. The age period between 13 and 20 years, which is characterized as a time of preparation for the adulthood, is highlighted as particularly relevant. At this stage, parenting work is encouraged to be given special importance. At this stage, young people are generally characterized as reckless and with a tendency to dream and fantasize about their future, while when faced with difficulties during the implementation of these dreams, educators are encouraged to pay special attention to signs of hard-heartedness and sentimentality. When describing each of the genders, it is indicated that young men are characterized by audacity, impudence, focus on their ideals, striving for admiration. On the other hand, young women start to show their pride, they try to become more loved, admired, but they often turn out to be lazy and sloppy in their tasks (Barbins, 1926). The involvement of society and family in school life is also assessed as a value, indicating that so far school and education issues have not been popular in society, while parents' interests have been more utilitarian (Ozolina, 1922). Thus, respectful cooperation becomes one of the cornerstones of pedagogy, which is mutual, creating closer cooperation among the school, students and their parents.

Discourse of educational values in the pedagogical process

In order to implement the values of the new education system in life, the importance of the school as the implementer of these values is highlighted. The school is characterized as a place where strict order prevails and is oriented towards eternal values, based on objective norms and a high pedagogical idea. However, at the same time, it is emphasized that the school can no longer be a place where unnecessary severity, external formalism and pedantry prevail, even though emphasizing that students who do not want or cannot meet the school's requirements, should not be in school (Dauge, 1924). Describing the pedagogical task of the school, A. Zvaigzne states: “The task of the school is to give children knowledge, or rather, to teach them to acquire the knowledge and train these children to apply this knowledge in life” (Zvaigzne, 1926, 3). It should be noted that the law at that time stipulated that compulsory education is for children between 6 and 16 years of age. It should be noted that the law at that time stipulated that compulsory education is for children between 6 and 16 years of age. Although there was an important emphasis on the individualization of the personality, the recognition of the essential importance of the collective in the growth of the personality also remained. The upbringing process is described as a process in which assimilation takes place through the collective, so the mutual influence of individualization and socialization on the development of personality can be observed. Here, as an essential guarantor of a high-quality socialization process in the classroom, high-quality classroom management is mentioned, which is based on the teacher's ability to provide support for all levels of students' abilities, including support in the development of talents. In the learning process of socialization, the main benefits are described as the opportunity to view and analyse problems from different aspects, because the discovery of knowledge takes place from different directions, as well as

new aspects of problems that have not been analysed before are highlighted in discussions and cooperation (Dauge, 1928). At the same time, the ideal of pedagogical activity is characterized as a learning process in which the student actively participates, demonstrating the skills of analysis, comparison and combination. Such a learning process and skill development is described as the cornerstone of a harmoniously developed personality (Dreimanis, 1921).

The main goal of the teacher's pedagogical activity, in relation to the student, is the development of a harmonious and useful personality for society. The teacher's own personality is given little importance in the periodicals of this period of history, the main emphasis is on the teacher's ability to achieve all the above-mentioned results of teaching and upbringing. However, it is pointed out that in order for a teacher to achieve the goal of their pedagogical activity, they themselves must be experienced personalities, ones who have something to give to their students. A. Dauge describes the teacher: "In order for the activity to take place in this direction, new teachers are needed for this - those who themselves would be seekers, researchers, creative spirits. People whose knowledge, insights, and convictions would not have been mechanically appropriated, but primarily grown organically from their deep personal experiences" (Dauge, 1920). Teachers themselves must possess all the thinking and life skills they wish to develop in their students. The teacher is expected to be an original, independent and autonomous personality. Only in this case will the teacher be able to serve as a role model for his students (Dauge, 1920).

The importance of the teacher's motivation is emphasized as important, stating that the teacher must be interested in their pedagogical activity, constantly observe their students and determine their development needs (Zvaigzne, 1926), follow up on current pedagogic and educational findings in their field (Petersons, 1928). The teacher must be flexible and in development (Liepins, 1922a). In order for the teacher to be able to implement the pedagogical process in a high-quality way, psychology must also be among their interests. Even though it is pointed out that knowledge of psychology does not yet guarantee pedagogical ability, however, for teachers who are recognized as endowed with pedagogical skills, the knowledge and application of psychology are considered as a valuable additional skill (Dauge, 1928). Mutual relations between teachers and students are considered to be an essential component of a quality learning process (Liepins, 1922b).

Taking into account that the Latvia State was newly formed and did not have its own experience as a national and independent state, very different ideological and political affiliations of teachers were observed, which was noticeable and also affected their daily work. As A. Greber points out: "When transforming the school on new, national foundations, lots of things also change in the mutual relations among teachers (...) Much to our regret and misfortune for our schools, these relations are often hostile. It often happens that teachers are divided into two hostile groups, where they fight each other. The reasons for this are the material conditions and the diversity of worldviews" (Grebers, 1922, 107). Already at that time, the issue of the disproportionate workload of teachers was brought up, especially when talking about rural schoolteachers. According to E. Miller, the workload of teachers consists of both work with children and preliminary preparation for lessons, various action plans and reviews, discussions and conferences, emphasizing also the large amount of extracurricular activities, which results in teacher overload and health problems (Miller, 1926).

It should be noted that due to the lack of funding and human resources, the education system was unable to implement the set political goals for a long time after the adoption of the Education Law. The lack of materials was also due to the fact that there was no textbook that corresponded to the new teaching methods, ignorance of the language and the lack of materials in Latvian were also an obstacle. L. Ausejs also wrote about it in the monthly newsletter of the Ministry of Education: "Knowledge of German and English was also

insufficient to be able to use teaching materials created in the languages of the respective countries in the learning process, so it was necessary to create them in Latvian” (Ausejs, 1923, 424). Teachers of Latvia studied the historical experience at home, gained inspiration for pedagogical ideas abroad, mainly in Germany and Russia. The main authorities who influenced the development of pedagogical thought in Latvia were G. Kersensteiner, H. Gauding, J. H. Pestalocijs, F. A. Distervegs., K. Usinskis, L. Tolstoy, etc. (Zukovs, 1999, 263.) The most prominent teachers of European countries, H. Gaudings, A. Bogens, O. Zeinings, gave lectures and led open classes in Latvia, introducing local teachers to new methods (Kestere, 2005, 78). The pedagogical thought in Latvia was developed by analysing foreign theory and practice, as well as the experience of local schools. In the monthly newsletter of the Ministry of Education, in the article *“How German Teachers Work”*, the author J. Broka mentions: “Relatively there are not many new teachers. They are hardly noticeable in the classroom: they ask little, tell little, sometimes only suggest, reprimand, help. All the work is done by students; therefore, here in the classroom there is life, joy, knowledge gained through work. But the number of these “new” teachers is constantly growing, as the old school staff are also trying to settle in and practice the new ways of working” (Broca, 1923, 1220). It should be noted that basically during the period of Latvia's first free state, in the democratic regime, the education system, in compliance with trends in Europe, was dominated by the reform pedagogy, whose theoretical founder is considered to be J. Dewey, who especially emphasizes that nature is the volume and interaction of various objects in time and space, while the goal of education is to create a unified set of knowledge and skills that correlates with the existence of each individual - self-awareness both individually and as part of a common entirety (Dewey, 1897).

Conclusions

- 1 The first half of the 20th century is a period full of challenges, changes, in which innovative ideas are encountered that face conservative resistance. Especially in the post-war period the growth and emergence of new ideas can be seen in the education system as a whole. In schools, a student-centred learning approach is emphasized, while the teacher is the leader of the learning process and a support provider for the student.
- 2 Based on the available and analysed historical sources, the following educational values can be identified during the first independence period of the Latvia State in the democratic regime: (I) creativity as a value of teaching and learning, which allows to develop the individual characteristics of the student; (II) discipline as a learning value, which was later also reflected in the student's evaluations, thus the students' behaviour was assessed formatively; (III) individualization as a value of teaching and learning, being aware of the importance of the needs of the collective, thus the student was perceived as an individual of society, who, through a professionally implemented upbringing and learning process, can contribute to the growth of the collective and thus society; (IV) the teacher's personality and professional mastery as an essential prerequisite for the learning process provision; (V) students' obedience, kindness, humility and love of the fatherland as the value of education and a prerequisite for personal growth; (VI) cooperation as a value of teaching and learning, which is formed on respectful relationships, increasing the participation of parents in the growth of the school and the learning process improvement.
- 3 Teachers and other developers of pedagogical thought learned from the good practices of other countries, trying to adapt the methods to schools in Latvia, were invited to experience exchange events outside Latvia, and hosted foreign teachers, thus the Latvia State and employees of its education sector were actively involved in the exchange of

- international experience and implementation of progressive pedagogical ideas.
- 4 When the state of Latvia was founded, minority schools were also opened, which were financed from the state budget, thus preserving and promoting the culture of minority communities. The number of students and the number of higher educational establishments also increased rapidly, which was possible thanks to the increase in the state funding from the state budget for higher education and science.
 - 5 Despite the socio-economic and demographic consequences of the First World War, as well as the pronounced lack of material, technical and human capital, the newly established Latvia State created its own education system, being aware of the innovative pedagogical approaches of the given era.

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