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Reform Pedagogy in Slovakia in the Interwar Period (Specifics and Selected Examples from Practice)[1]

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ABSTRACT

Reform Pedagogy in Slovakia in the Interwar Period (Specifics and Selected Examples from Practice)

Our paper aims to point out a reform pedagogy in Slovakia in the interwar period (1918–1939). Based on the study of primary literary, archival sources and school sources, the aim of the paper is 1) to clarify foundations of reform pedagogy in a wider context of school policy and education in Slovakia after the establishment of Czechoslovakia, 2) to identify its key elements and specifics, 3) to document examples of selected reform schools based on archival sources, 4) to clarify the place of reform pedagogy in a wider pedagogical and socio-political development of the interwar Czechoslovakia.

Introduction

The dissolution of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy and the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic (CSR) is the key event in the development of Slovak nation in the modern Slovak history. For the first time in history, Slovakia became an administrative unit with its own territory and a new history of Slovak statehood began (cf. Kováč, 2012). The new republic was created in complicated economic and social conditions,[2] which were the remainder of WWI, on one hand and in new political conditions of the origination of CSR, which were accompanied by inexperience of political elites, on the other hand.

The topic of the school reform naturally became an important part of pedagogical discussion in the new state – both of the Czech and Slovak side. With regard to a specific educational--political development in Slovakia to 1918 in Hungary as well as with regard to the development of the Slovak education in Czechoslovakia (discussed below) it may be stated that the Slovak reform education movement was developed between two poles. The first pole

[1] © Translation Marína Vidanová.
[2] Slovakia was largely an agrarian country in this period, 19.7% of the working population worked in industry and 64.3% worked in agriculture[2] (Svetoň, 1958, p. 82).

was given by the reform pedagogical program that was given mainly by the Czech reform--pedagogical discussion; the second pole was determined by the then Slovak school tradition and Slovak discussion. The reform pedagogical attempts in Slovakia are thus a specific intersection of efforts for school reform determined by the Czech leaders of the school reform and a specific situation of the Slovak education.
Our paper aims to point out a reform pedagogy in Slovakia in the interwar period (1918–1939). We interpret the archival sources (State District Archives Trnava, collection School Inspectorate Trnava and school sources (school chronicle) in the context of the educational historical analysis of school reform in Czechoslovakia (Pánková, Kasperová and Kasper, 2015; Kasperová, 2018; Kasper and Kasperová, 2020).

For Slovaks, the establishment of the republic literally saved the Slovak nation and the Slovak education. In the second half of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, education and schooling were the primary tool of magyarization that was supposed to lead to assimilation and establishment of a united Hungarian nation. The closing of Matica Slovenska (1875) and three Slovak grammar schools (1874–1875), which the Slovaks founded and sustained themselves, according to the historian of pedagogy Jozef Pšenák (2011), struck a heavy blow at the Slovak national-political movement. After adoption of Appony's School Acts (1907 and 1908), it was possible to teach in national schools only in Hungarian, which, together with public nurseries, became the most important instrument of magyarization. The Hungarian school council had school inspectorates in Upper Hungary that supervised observance of these laws (Kázmerová, 2016). Strong magyarization in the second half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century disabled fulfilment of the primary role of education: to educate and to prepare new generations for individual areas of political, social and economic life.
In 1918, in Slovakia, there was only 140 Slovak public schools out of 3 641 (only 4%) and all 83 burgher schools were Hungarian (Slovenské školstvo v prítomnosti, 1932, p. 11). Naturally, it did not correspond to the number of Slovaks, who, according to Hungarian statistics of 1910 formed 57.6% in this area (Čečetka, 1943, p. 257). One of the consequences of the non--existing possibility of education in the mother tongue was a very low number of the Slovak students at secondary schools and universities, which caused the problem of the missing middle class and intelligentsia after the establishment of CSR.
The given situation also involved an acute lack of Slovak teachers at all levels of schools, which was even deepened by the departure of teachers of Hungarian nationality after the establishment of CSR who rejected to administer so-called service oath of teaching in terms of the Government Order No. 495/1919. Due to the rejection of the oath of allegiance the school administration released 2 397 Hungarian teachers from all levels, including 1 432 public school teachers, on September 20th, 1921. In the school year 1920/21, 1 971 teachers of Hungarian nationality remained working in the field of education, out of who 1 685 at public schools and 137 at burgher schools (Gabzdilová, 2014). The solution of the problem of staffing of teacher positions became a priority of the School Department and A. Štefánek

asked the Minister of education and national awareness, Vavro Šrobár, for help regarding the assistance of Czech teachers.[3] From 1920, all teachers in Slovakia needed to pass so-called nostrification exams that required knowledge of the Slovak language, geography and Czechoslovak history.

The specific situation in Slovak education in 1918 can be demonstrated on the following data, too: there did not exist any Slovak secondary school or university (Slovenské školstvo v prítomnosti, 1932, p. 30); the number of unschooled children in 1918 was estimated at 40–50 thousand (Ibid., p. 10); religious schools were well represented in Slovakia: in 1917/18 there were 74.5% religious schools out of all schools in the Slovak territory, 21.8% state schools, 3% public schools (orig. *obecné školy*), 0.7% private and federal schools (Čečetka, 1943, p. 257); shortage of Slovak textbooks at all levels of education, there did not exist any scientific-educational workplace.

Ideological Foundations of Reform Pedagogy in a Wider Context of School Policy and Education after 1918

The discussion on the school reform in Slovakia was in a large extent based on the efforts of the state – the Ministry of Education and National Awareness (MENA) based in Prague – for the reform of school system after 1918. A subordinated Department of Education (orig. *Školský referát*) of MENA based in Bratislava was established in Slovakia according to Act No. 64/1918. It was the first institution that managed education in Slovakia ever. Among its fundamental tasks after 1918 was "slovakisation" of the existing school system, disposal of illiteracy, establishment of Slovak schools of all levels focusing on primary education and unification of different school system in Czech lands and Slovakia" (Kázmerová, 2012, p. 12). Implementation of the Slovak language as the language of schooling into all levels and types of schools was connected to the training of qualified Slovak teachers for all levels of schools.

The Act No. 226 Coll. from 1922, so-called *Little School Act*, was the key act in the field of primary and burgher schools. The act implemented eight-year-long compulsory school attendance up to the age 14 in the entire Czechoslovakia (by then, there was eight-year-long compulsory attendance in the Czech lands and six-year-long compulsory attendance in Slovakia). However, it did not deal with the issue of existence of two types of schools in the second grade or with the issue of higher education.[4] The act acknowledged the equality of male and female teachers and co-education of pupils. Teaching plans were extended to three new subjects: civic education, domestic education for girls and handicraft education

[3] The Czech teachers and professors came to Slovakia in terms of the Act No. 605/1919, which enabled to officially order a civil servant to work at any place in CSR. At the beginning of the school year 1919/1920, at public schools, there were 424 teachers from Bohemia and Moravia, 77 from Slovakia and 923 teacher positions were unoccupied (School Department Administration, 1920, vol. 1).

[4] In terms of the above stated structure of education after finishing the 5th year of primary school (aged 11), the pupils could continue in higher years of primary school (6th – 8th year) or to enrol in the 1st year of burgher school and after graduating, they could continue their studies at secondary, vocational or apprentice school. Pupils who were interested in future university studies, attended 8-year-long grammar schools after they completed the 5th year of primary school. Grammar schools were the only way of preparation for university studies.

for boys. Religious education remained in the teaching plan; however, parents had the opportunity to unsubscribe their child. Concerning the unification of compulsory school attendance from six to eight years, the regulation started to be implemented in Slovakia in the school year 1927/28 under the Decree of MENA No. 4530-I. from 26th April 1927. The cause of backwardness of the implementation of the Little School Act in Slovakia is according to Kázmerová (2012) based on the prevailing socio-political and economic conditions. It was not possible to provide, for example, school premises, higher number of teachers, new textbooks and teaching aids, since it would mean a great financial burden for the state budget.
The orientation of the school reform in Slovakia was, however, also based on "ideological pedagogical program" of the school reform that was developed mainly in the Czech lands (Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia). Here, the main "architect" of the school reform Václav Příhoda (1889–1979)[5] managed to close up teachers organised in representative communities (mainly *Czechoslovak Teacher Community* – orig. *Československá obec učitelská*) for the goals of the reform, to win an important part of political representation to his side and to connect the school reform program to the deeper base of the Czech pedagogical discussion led and developed from the 1920s (Kasperová, 2018; Kasper and Kasperová, 2020, Kudláčová, 2017, Lukáč, 2016). Shortly, it may be said that the reform school program managed to connect the emphasis on individual focus of the process of teaching and on the so-called social (socialising) task of teaching and school education (Mauer, Lippert and Kratochvíl, 1933). The school reform was supposed to reside in unification of various types of schools at the lower secondary level and their connection with primary level in one school institution respecting heterogeneity of pupils through the model of inner differentiation – *unified differential school* (orig. *jednotná diferencovaná škola*). The discussion on the form of the school reform crystallised out after 1928 in a complex reform program based on a theoretical conception by Václav Příhoda[6] that was realised on selected schools (Praha-Michle, Praha--Hostivař, Praha-Nusle, Humpolec, Zlín), which were quickly joined by many other schools in Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia as well as Slovakia, as shown in the following part of the study.

[5] Václav Příhoda (1889–1979) was a supporter of educational positivism and the main inspirer of the educational reform movement in the Czech lands. He was influenced by his two study stays in the USA, where he met the then renowed pedagogues and psychologists (influenced the most by E. L. Thorndike and J. Dewey) and a stay in Switzerland (there he met E. Claparede, P. Bovet, A. Ferreira, J. Piaget). Mátej (1976) emphasizes the fact that Příhoda published – in Slovakia and in Slovak language – his notable work *Reformné hľadiská v didaktike* (1934), which is a pendant to his *Racionalizácia školstva* (in Czech in 1930).

[6] The proposition for the unified differential school was published by Příhoda in his paper *Jednotná škola. Její možnosti dnes a zítra* in the journal *Školské reformy* in 1928. The overall conception of the reform was clarified in the Příhoda's publication *Racionalizácia školstva* (1930). In contrast to the previously established school philosophy, according to which a child had to adapt to the level of education, the reform school adjusts to the individuality of a pupil (Příhoda, 1930). Other principles included: activity of a pupil replacing static nature; selection of content according to its applicability in life replacing the quantity of encyclopaedic knowledge; employment of pupil's abilities while solving the given task replacing lots of useless knowledge.

Key Elements and Specifics of the Educational Reform Movement in Slovakia

Ideas of the educational reform movement and the idea of unified differential school were implemented in Slovakia with a certain delay in comparison to the Czech lands. They were spread mainly through journals of education and other specialised sources of literature, through personal contacts with Czech reform teachers (many of whom were based in Slovakia), later on through excursions and visits to Czech pilot schools and through participation in meetings of reform teachers.

The first pilot schools in Slovakia were established three years later than in the Czech lands, i.e. in 1932/33. Pilot burgher schools were established in Trnava, Malacky (Western Slovakia), where the centre of the reform movement was the city of Trnava and in Michalovce in the Eastern Slovakia, where the centre of the reform movement were the cities Prešov and Košice (cf. Lukáč, 2012, pp. 57–60). Among the first pilot schools was the State burgher school for boys in Trnava, where the methods of individualisation, differentiation and autonomous learning were introduced in 1932/33. Instead of traditional classrooms, specialised classrooms for individual subjects were established. Differentiation took place at first according to marks, which actually did not prove useful and therefore, starting in 1935/36 another criterion for pupils' differentiation[7] was applied – differentiation according to their interests.[8] Another pilot school in the Western Slovakia was the Burgher school of Dr. Ivan Dérer in Malacky. In 1935, all classrooms in the school were pilot classrooms. One of the means of education toward a collective was a school magazine *Naše hlasy (Our Voices)*, publication of which was provided by pupils themselves (Špánik, 1935a). The collective of pupils had an important role also in sanctioning some of offenses in a class (e.g. reprimanding, loss of the right to vote, ban on participation in team games, etc.). The sanctions were announced at pupils' assemblages. One of the main aims of František Feterrik, who taught at the burgher school in Michalovce, was to transform a conventional school to a creative school and to transform classes to workplaces (Lukáč, 2016). In order to support educational possibilities, he created a library, the life in classrooms was documented on wall maps of daily events, etc.

According to Miklovič (1969), Příhoda was the ideological leader and organiser of the school reform nationwide. His most consistent helper in Slovakia was the Czech teacher František Musil (1893–1969), who was Příhoda's pupil. In Slovakia, he worked in Teachers' Institute in Bratislava (1921–1931) at first and later as a school inspector in the School Inspectorate in Trnava (1931–1938).[9] Already during his time in Bratislava he became the chairman of the editorial board of the journal *Naša škola (Our School)* (from 1929), which influenced thinking and shaping of Slovak reform teachers significantly. After his arrival to Trnava he even

[7] Collection ŠI Trnava. Box no. 31. File no. 50. State District Archives Trnava.

[8] Before the beginning of the school year pupils of the 1st and 2nd year were offered activities like violin, choral recitation, choral singing, drama, German language, modeling, scouting, physical education activities, geography, which were held once a week in two lessons. In the 3rd and 4th year the pupils chose one of the facultative courses (French or English language) which they combined either with an optional course (stenography) or one of the extensional courses (biology, drawing, physics, measuring).

[9] Collection ŠI Trnava. Box no. 79. File no. 109. State District Archives Trnava.

multiplied his activities, as a result, Trnava and the region of Trnava became the centre of the educational reform movement in Slovakia. Since he worked as a school inspector, he had the necessary competences and possibilities to promote the conception of the unified differential school. During his time in Slovakia, Musil published *Prejavy. Pokus o celistvé vyučovanie a výchovu prejavovú v prvom školskom roku I.* and *II.* (1927), a methodology handbook for teachers *Čítanie globálnou metódou* (1930) and handbooks for primary science *Prax na nižšom stupni I.* and *II.* (1937). Musil can be considered the most significant pioneer of reform education in Slovakia (Kudláčová, 2014). His name is associated with the establishment of Trnava Pedagogical Seminar (1934) and the journal *Naša škola,* which were the platform for spreading of the thoughts of the educational reform movement in Slovakia and fundamental pillars in creating of the philosophy of the reform school in Slovakia.

From 1926 to 1939, the journal *Naša škola* was issued monthly and consisted of 32 pages. In the editorial of the first issue it can be found that it wants to become "a faithful, impartial and reliable assistant to all teachers in Slovakia, regardless of the character of the school".[10] Martin Ježo and Rudolf Kratochvíl were the editors in chief of the journal in the first four years of its existence and after them it was František Musil. The journal became a platform for the supporters of the educational reform movement under Musil's leadership and it stirred a lively educational activity, which was gradually freeing itself from the strong national--emancipative spirit. The content orientation of contributions may serve for observation of the development of Slovak reform movement and its protagonists.[11] In 1939 the existence of the journal was interrupted; its renewal after the war did not take place.

In September 1934, Musil established *Trnava Pedagogical Seminar,*[12] which was a voluntary association of teachers and supporters of the educational reform movement in the region of Trnava. Its aim was to broaden theoretical and practical knowledge in individual fields of reform education. The association did not have an institutionalised form, but it had great importance in shaping reform teachers and disseminating information. A. Řezanin, the headmaster at a pilot burgher school for boys in Trnava, became the first chairman of Trnava Pedagogical Seminar (Brťková, 1994). The Seminar existed for four school years, up to 1937/38. Its specific activity was to organise lectures aimed at reform movements in education, excursions to pilot schools in the Czech lands, practical courses, but also provision of information on the latest pedagogical literature and to engage teachers in research activities, etc. Lecturing activities and excursions can be considered the two most important areas of shaping of the teachers.

[10] *Úvodník* (Naša škola, 1926, 1, p. 1).

[11] From the perspective of time, the content of the journal was shaped in three phases. In the first phase, it focused on papers presenting information on reform movement worldwide and in the Czech lands in particular, whose authors were mainly Czech teachers from pilot schools; in the second phase, it focused on papers on the needs of Slovak national school, whose authors were both Czech and Slovak teachers; and in the third phase (mid 1930s), it were predominantly papers published by Slovak reform pedagogues on their own practical attempts and experiences.

[12] No documents related to the issue of Trnava Pedagogical Seminar were found in the State District Archives Trnava.

In the period of the existence of Trnava Pedagogical Seminar, a relatively systematic non--formal education of reform teachers and the greatest advancement of educational reform ideas can be observed. Musil organised workshops for teachers every two months, whose content was, for instance, the issue of global method of writing and reading in the 1st year, group form of teaching, the issue of fine arts education and physical education, the issue of orthography and analysis of its deficiencies, etc. Workshops were carried out on a voluntary basis and even teachers outside the region of Trnava attended them. According to Brťková (1994), 75 teachers attended the workshops on average. Sections for the Slovak language, sums, globalisation, drawing, biology, national history, geography, choral recitation, school film and national defence education (orig. *branná výchova*) were gradually created within the Seminar.

Excursions to pilot schools, which were carried out in cooperation with the journal *Naša škola*, formed an important agenda of the Trnava Pedagogical Seminar. Trnava teachers attended an excursion to Prague pilot schools in Nusle and Michle in 1932 and 1933, in 1935 an excursion to Zlín took place and in 1937 to a pilot burgher school in Boskovice in Moravia. The Seminar of education organised also one-day excursions to pilot schools in the district of Trnava (to the pilot burgher school in Trnava as well as to schools that did not have an official status of a pilot school, but schooling was carried out in a similar manner as in pilot schools, e.g. primary schools in Majcichov, Opoj, Báhoň, Dechtice).

Musil also organised the 1st congress of friends of the school reform in Slovakia that took place on 8th June 1935 in Trnava. 250 teachers participated (Špánik, 1935b). Plenary lecture was delivered by Václav Příhoda. A requirement of creation of a network of reform schools in Slovakia was formulated at the congress. It was attended by representatives from all parts of Slovakia; however, teachers from the Western Slovakia were the most numerous. In 1937, under Musil's supervision, a nationwide conference of pilot school teachers took place in Trenčianske Teplice (27th – 30th May). After the separation of Czechoslovakia into Bohemia and Moravia and the establishment of the Slovak State in 1938, Musil had to return back to the Czech lands.

Examples of Reform Schools Based on the Archival Research

Based on the archival research that I conducted it can be concluded that besides official pilot schools in the region of Trnava there existed several pilot schools that did not have the official status of a pilot school. However, methods of teaching and approach to pupils at these schools are in accordance with the character of pilot schools (e.g. it regards primary schools in Majcichov, Opoj, Báhoň, Dechtice). I labelled these schools as "hidden" pilot schools.

In the following part of the paper, two specific examples of Slovak schools are presented. Both examples are outcomes of archival research.

The Roman-Catholic primary school in Majcichov

Michal Kopčan (1885–1947) was after Musil the most significant figure and a promoter of the educational reform movement in Trnava region and he also took over the function of a school inspector after him (1938–1941). Between 1923–1937 (with a break in 1932) Kopčan was a director of the Roman-Catholic primary school in Majcichov and introduced lots of reform elements, even though the school did not have an official status of a pilot school. He implemented variety of novelties already in the first year of his teaching, e.g. each teacher had to have a detailed outline of educational content and a timetable, he collected 1 Kčs from each pupil for the needs of pupils' and teachers' library, he led the children toward charitable feelings through collecting eggs for orphans in Kláštor pod Znievom[13], he founded Sanitary Association, which later transformed into Red Cross[14], he introduced 7th year (until then only 6 years were attended), he introduced the so-called repetition classes for weaker pupils that were held after regular classes or on Sunday (in school year 1926/27 the 8th and 9th year were included)[15], he introduced school trips (in 1924 to Bratislava and Devín, 1925 to Trenčín and to Skalka, 1926 and 1928 to Tatras, 1927 to Banská Bystrica)[16], he introduced the so-called school saving bank, which was managed by the pupils themselves[17], he introduced teaching of new subjects (handwork for girls, physical education and civic education), he introduced the so-called "school puppet theatre", for which he wrote scripts[18]. In Kopčan's personal file in the district archive I found a written application requiring independent timetable for his elementary class of 1933/34, which confirms that he applied new methods in teaching.[19] He extended the method of global teaching not only in teacher institutes in Modra, Trnava and Bratislava, but also in many primary schools in Trnava surroundings. He implemented the methods of learning through playing to several subjects, he used several visual teaching aids, mainly in science. The primary school in Majcichov was in its teaching-learning character very close to pilot schools and it can be underscored by the fact that in 1935 the school was visited by teachers from Topoľčany district and Prievidza as a part of their excursion.[20]

Regarding Kopčan's publication and editorial activity, he was an editor of the journal *Slovenská škola (Slovak School),* which was published from 1919 to 1921. He published in journals *Naša škola (Our School)* and *Slovenský učiteľ (Slovak Teacher)*. His reform efforts can be also seen in his following works: geography textbook for primary schools *Zemepis republiky Československej* (Trnava, 1925), sums textbook for primary schools *Mladý počtár I.* (Praha, 1935) and *Mladý počtár II.* (Praha, 1936), methodical guide for teachers *Prax na nižšom stupni I., II.* (Praha–Prešov, 1937), local history textbook *Naša záhradka* (1936–41) and readers *Slovenské kvety II, IV, V* (Trnava, 1940–41), he is also a co-author of the

[13] School Chronicle of Roman-Catholic primary school in Majcichov, pp. 64, 68–69, 80, 90.
[14] Ibid, pp. 68–69, 83.
[15] Ibid. p. 69.
[16] Ibid. pp. 39, 51, 65, 81, 72–73.
[17] Ibid, p. 62.
[18] Ibid., p. 105.
[19] Collection ŠI Trnava. Box No. 49. File No. 87. State District Archives Trnava.
[20] Ibid.

publication *Grafické prejavy na nižšom stupni ľudových škôl* (Trnava, 1941). In his personal file in the District Archives in Trnava, I found letters from the Ministry of Education that assigned him with assessment of several textbooks for primary schools. In 1926, he was appointed a member of a committee for elaboration of curriculum for primary schools in Slovakia by the School Department, MENA.[21] In 1940, he created a detailed curriculum for Slovak primary schools.[22]

The primary school in Opoj

Regarding the primary school in Opoj, I followed the minutes from meetings of the teacher assembly in 1931–1936, which are archived in the State District Archives in Trnava and comprehensibly elaborated in detail.[23] Compared to other primary schools it was a small school, counting 140 pupils on 5th October 1931.[24] Ernest Miklovič (1907–1977)[25] was a headmaster in the school years 1931/32 – 1934/35 and his wife Alžbeta was a teacher. Already after his arrival Miklovič started implementing reform steps, what is well documented in the minutes from 6th June 1932. There is a record on piloting of new curriculum and the teachers were supposed to assess it and propose ideas related to changes for the following school year, deadline being 6th June. It means that reforms were implemented starting in September 1931. The curriculum was to be tested for the period of three years and after its assessment it was meant to be applied for a given period of time.[26] According to Miklovič, the advantage of the new curriculum was its unity and independent teaching method. In the minutes from 2nd September 1932 it is recorded that "in this school year we will continue in implementation of school reforms."[27]

Other records, which certify the pilot-character of the school, can be presented and specific manifestations can be identified. Similarly to Kopčan in Majcichov, Miklovič organised school trips. The following statement can be found in the minutes from 26th May 1931. "The best local history course is a school trip."[28] Miklovič expressed himself toward the subject Sums, which he taught, in the minutes from 6th June 1932: "Let the timetable of the subject

[21] School chronicle of the Roman-Catholic primary school in Majcichov, p. 53.
[22] Kopčan's activity exceeded the framework of school and education; he was an organist in the local church and composed religious songs by himself. According to information in School Chronicle, he founded amateur theatre assembly consisting of local youth, he organised meetings of parents about education of children, civil rights and current economic issues; in winter time, when there was no work in the field, he organised *Ľudový náukobeh (Folk teaching)* annually, where he delivered lectures on selected topics for parents of school children, he founded reading club entitled *Čítací a vzdelávací spolok Jána Palárika (Ján Palárik Association for Reading and Education)* (it had 45 members), he founded girls' choir, which sang at public feasts and twenty-four-member musical group, which he also led as a bandmaster.
[23] Regarding official pilot schools, the minutes from the meetings of teachers at the Burgher school for Boys in Trnava were found in the State District Archives in Trnava, too, however, the minutes were archived only since 1937 and it was not detailed. The list of students attending the school was also found.
[24] Primary school in Majcichov had 284 pupils on the same date (Collection ŠI Trnava. Box No. 119. File No. 162. State District Archives Trnava).
[25] E. Miklovič graduated from the Teacher Institute in Modra (1926) and he belonged to notable teacher figures of the Slovak reform education in the interwar period.
[26] Collection ŠI Trnava. Box No. 7. File No. 93. State District Archives Trnava.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.

matter not to be restricted to 20, it is necessary to follow the interest of children."[29] Regarding reading, which was taught by Miklovič's wife, the following can be read in the minutes from 14th December 1932. "She implemented reading from cards, because the ABC books do not comply and this new method of reading proved itself."[30] It can be assumed that she used the global method of reading.

In several minutes refer to magazines and journals – for children a new magazine *Mladý život (Young Life)* was recommended and *Naša škola (Our School), Tvorivá škola (Creative School), Komenský (Comenius), Pedagogické rozhľady (Educational Horizons)* were recommended for teachers. References to and recommendations of several reform educational activities can be found, too: excursion to pilot Prague schools (the minutes from 2nd September 1932 and 6th October 1933), participation in 5th Congress for Research of Children in Brno (the minutes from 6th October 1933), recommendations of attending Trnava Pedagogical Seminar (the minutes from 23rd October 1934), excursion to pilot school in Zlín (the minutes from 9th March1935), a lecture by Ľudovít Kukula in the Seminar on *The Impact of Philosophy on Pedagogy* (the minutes from 23rd October 1934), etc.

Based on the minutes archived for the period 1931–1935 it can be concluded that Miklovič implemented reform activities systematically, at the end of a school year he and the teachers assessed them and proposed possible changes for the following year. Pupils were differentiated and reform methods were applied in all classrooms.[31] He activated pupils through school trips, he held the so-called children's day and many other activities. The analysis also reveals that Miklovič was closely connected to the centre of reform events in Trnava – Trnava Pedagogical Seminar. He also contributed to the journal Naša škola.

Position of Reform Pedagogy in a Wider Socio-Political and Pedagogical Development in the Interwar Period

Situation of Slovaks and the Slovak nation after the establishment of the first Czechoslovak republic was very specific in comparison to neighbouring nations. The reason was that national education did not exist in fact. Strong magyarisation, especially after the Austro--Hungarian Compromise in 1867, started to inhibit national awareness of Slovaks and it caused slowing down, even stopping, of this process. Slovaks together with the Czech nation created a new joint state in 1918, but they were at a very different economic, social and cultural level. According to Šuhajdová (2014, p. 185), "interwar problems of adult population such as unemployment, poverty, poor health, divorce rate, housing and sanitary conditions or growing socio-pathological phenomena" represented a problem for Slovak children and the youth as well.

However, the new political situation created a space for a dynamic process of national awareness and creation of identity of Slovak nation. Education and schooling represented a key element. At first, it was more about a material renewal of education: building new

[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.

schools of all levels, reconstruction of existing schools of all levels, modernization of school equipment[32], etc. It was immediately accompanied by gradual elimination of illiteracy.[33] Organisational and content transformation of education was the most demanding task. Throughout two decades of the interwar period a systematic transformation of education did not occur. After several unsuccessful attempts for a reform, teachers and public were becoming sceptic. Despite it can be stated that Slovak education (national, secondary and vocational) experienced a large qualitative and quantitative shift forward during the first decade of the newly created state.

The process of national awareness in the field of education and schooling in the interwar period can be noted in three areas: 1) in re-Slovakisation of the school system at all levels; after 1918 the language of instruction became the Slovak language and Slovak teachers started to teach there, 2) in formation of Slovak scientific pedagogy in the first pedagogical institution in Slovakia – in *Pedagogical Seminar* at the Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava (established in 1923/24); its founding was assisted by the Czech university pedagogues[34] and last but not least 3) in the development of the educational reform movement through reform teachers in pilot and "hidden" pilot schools, who were unsatisfied with slow school reforms from the side of the state. Czech teachers became significantly involved in the processes of dynamic renewal of education at all levels. This assistance was necessary; however, it had its positives and negatives, too. After the already mentioned magyarisation pressure, Slovaks could not develop their education through their own national elites and they needed help from the side of the Czech educational elite and Czech teachers. It represented a rather complicated situation from the perspective of national discussion and national--emancipative movement. On one hand, it was obvious that the Slovak national movement would not manage without the Czech help; on the other hand, it weakened the Slovak nation's self-esteem, which could have finally started a politically independent stage of development from the national perspective after 1918. The situation was even more complicated due to ideas of czechoslovakism (a united nation of Czechs and Slovaks), promoted by the Czech political representatives in CSR. Formally, the arrival of Czech teachers was perceived as a proof of help as well as educational and cultural closeness of Czechs and Slovaks. However, the ideas of czechoslovakism, which were a political construct, raised many questions in Slovakia: whether, for instance, it does not regard a repeated underestimation of Slovak independence and cultural and educational autonomy.

Concerning the reform movement in Slovakia, it can be claimed that the implementation of reformatory-educational conceptions and ideas was more open and offered better possibilities for national awareness of Slovak children than mainstream education and schooling. Such conclusions are based on the following:

[32] During the first decade of CSR (1918–1928) 314 primary schools and 17 burgher schools were built. 140 primary schools and 5 burgher schools were reconstructed.

[33] The number of unschooled children in 1918 was estimated to 40–50 thousand; in 1931 it was changed to 4 037 children.

[34] The Seminar was led by Czech professors, graduates from the Prague Pedagogical Seminar from the period of O. Kádner since its establishment until 1938: O. Chlup – as mentioned above, J. Hendrich and J. Uher.

- reform teachers were full of enthusiasm and due to being involved in the process of education more personally, they had a bigger influence on children,
- teachers established various voluntary associations, which enabled very quick passing and spreading of reform ideas,
- teachers were involved in the offer of leisure time activities for children more,
- provision of collective education and leading the children to responsibility for joint things and teaching them civic participation (e.g. pupils' self-governing bodies, pupils' assembly)
- organisation of school trips focused on discovering attractive places and parts of Slovakia,
- founding pupils' and teachers' libraries at schools,
- involvement of parents (parents' meetings),
- many from the reform teachers carried out various educational activities for public in the region they taught in, etc.

Overall, it may be said that the reform educational movement did not regard commands from the superior school bodies, it regarded activities "from the bottom" that were not marked by formalism and teachers' reluctance to their implementation. On the contrary, it was a manifestation of interest in pupils and improvement of education and its closeness to the needs of real life.

Conclusion

As mentioned above, the orientation of the reform educational movement was determined by personalities who were engaged in favour of its activities. A comparable situation was in Slovakia. Several unique persons who imprinted a specific character onto the movement may be found in individual regions, e.g. Fraňo Musil in the Western Slovakia (mainly the region of Trnava), Ľudovít Hrnčiar, Rudolf Mareš and Václav Stuchlík in the region of Prešov, or Martin Oríšek in the region of Košice in the Eastern Slovakia. The promising development of implementation of non-traditional teaching methods, new didactic means and ways of organisation of the teaching-learning process mainly in the 1930s, which were reflected in a number of manuals, journal studies and textbooks, were interrupted by the war events and political orientation of the first Slovak Republic (1939–1945). The study of E. Lukáč entitled *K diskusii o povojnovom vývoji školstva z hľadiska tradícií reformného pedagogického hnutia* (2017) demonstrates that the movement was relatively massive, including both the number of teachers and schools in which reform pedagogy was implemented completely or partially. It points out a fact that the movement persisted also in the period of the first Slovak Republic (similar findings can be found in Krankus, 2016), and some of the reform pedagogues were engaged (unfortunately without success) also in the period of Socialist reforms at the end of the 1940s. The last manifestations and attempts to return to reform ideas can be noted in the time of the Prague Spring in 1968.

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