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The German System of Public Education in the Period between the 15th and early 20th centuries. Part 1

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Abstract

This paper explores the origins of the German public education system. This part of the work provides an analysis of the formation process of the German primary education system between the 15th and 18th centuries. Also, this paper explores the use of philosophical approaches in German education, and examines the impact of Protestantism on the process of creation of the German primary education system.

The study is grounded on a body of related research and special literature. In effect, its methodological basis is based on the principles of historicism, research objectivity, and systemicity, which are traditional in historiography. The authors employed the following key methods: (1) problem-chronological, which helped explore certain facts in the evolution of the German system of public education in the context of the then-existing historical situation; (2) historical-comparative, which helped compare the objectives for introducing a network of schools in the Protestant and Catholic zones of the German empire.

The authors conclude by noting that during the period between the 15th and 18th centuries German pedagogy had its ups and downs. A setback to the fledging effort to establish a system of public education, first undertaken back in the 15th century, was the Thirty Years' War. German regions were divided based on religion – paradoxical as it may sound, it is this division that actually gave rise to competition for congregation. Ultimately, this acted as a key driver in the process of creating an extensive network of primary schools.

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1. Introduction

Investigating the development of the German public education system, as well as exploring the history of German pedagogy, is of special significance for the world community. The reasons include both that in the past it is, for the most part, in Germany that pedagogy had developed as a science and that for quite a long period of time (particularly, up until the 1930s) it was German that had acted as the main language of science in the world.

This paper examines the version of the German state which is known as the German Empire, and was created in 1871. The empire incorporated four kingdoms, six grand duchies, seven principalities, and three free cities. At the time the regions were joined, Germany had an area of around 540,000 km² (Yuzhakov, 1903: 514).

2. Materials and methods

The work's materials are grounded in a body of related research and special literature.

The study's methodological basis is the principles of historicism, research objectivity, and systemicity, which are traditional in historiography. The authors employed the following key methods: (1) problem-chronological, which helped explore certain facts in the evolution of the German system of public education in the context of the then-existing historical situation; (2) historical-comparative, which helped compare the objectives for introducing a network of schools in the Protestant and Catholic zones of the German empire.

3. Discussion

The historiography related to the subject under examination may be divided chronologically – into the pre-revolutionary historiography (1860–1917) and the contemporary historiography (1918–2019).

In terms of the pre-revolutionary historiography, researchers have devoted a significant amount of attention to issues of public education in Germany in particular and in Europe as a whole. The subject has been explored by scholars Yu.S. Rekhnevskii (Rekhnevskii, 1860), P.N. Voeikov (Voeikov, 1873), A.V. Belyavskii (Belyavskii, 1887), F. Paulsen (Paulsen, 1908), N.V. Speranskii (Speranskii, 1898), and others.

The level of researchers' interest in the subject of philosophical currents in pedagogy as well has been quite high. This subject has been researched by scholars like H. Weimer (Weimer, 1913), M.I. Demkov (Demkov, 1912), E.P. Krevin (Krevin, 1915), E. Künoldt (Künoldt, 1897), G. Krenenberg (Krenenberg, 1896), F. Jakobi (Jakobi, 1916), F. Fischer (Fischer, 1912), and others.

In terms of the contemporary historiography, issues of the history of German and European history of pedagogy have been explored by scholars A.I. Piskunov (Piskunov, 1960), A.M. Mamadaliev (Mamadaliev et al., 2019), L.G. Abramova (Abramova, 2004), V.G. Bezrogov (Bezrogov, 2018), S.M. Marchukova (Marchukova, 2011), I.A. Sergienko (Sergienko, 2017), G. Rajović (Rajović et al., 2018; Rajović et al., 2018a), L.V. Obraztsova (Obraztsova, 1999), and others.

4. Results

Historically, the concept of public schools, i.e. schools intended to provide initial education to the lower strata of society, had long been foreign to the medieval Catholic world. In the period between the 14th and 15th centuries, the Catholic hierarchy only cared about the development of education amongst the higher strata of society. Medieval universities, academies, and Latin schools sought to produce educated priests for the needs of the church and turn out scholars and dignitaries for those of the state. The concept of public schools intended for teaching one the rules of the faith arose out of the spirit of opposition to the church hierarchy, the spirit of Protestantism. As early as the 15th century, under the influence of teachings by John Wycliffe*, there started to

* An English theologian, seminary professor at the University of Oxford, founder of a movement known as Wyclifism, which afterwards turned into a popular movement known as Lollardy, reformer, and forerunner of Protestantism.

circulate printed books that set out the rules of the faith for the people. Nonetheless, proper public school emerged only after Martin Luther's Reformation. It developed in a gradual manner – as Protestantism gradually gained its significance and necessity.

Similar to the way medieval Catholicism sought support in monastic orders and monasteries, Protestantism had to lean on schools. For that purpose, in states which embraced Protestantism a major portion of former monastic property was directed toward the establishment and upkeep of schools. Along with Latin schools, there also started to emerge and gain prominence German trade schools for boys and girls. An important fact is that schools would be established only in cities (Rekhnevskii, 1860a: 7).

Ultimately, it was catechization, i.e. interpretation of major rules of the faith, that served as the beginning of the German school. During the first decades following the Reformation, the German public school was about nothing but church catechization, through which a pastor had to provide instruction to the children. As early as the mid-16th century, catechization had been instituted in all Protestant churches in Germany. However, the labors of just one pastor were not sufficient, so there appeared in 16th century canons in Protestant states a new church post – a junior deacon. A junior deacon's duties, inter alia, included teaching the children catechism, prayers, and church singing (Rekhnevskii, 1860a: 9).

The junior deacon, jointly with the pastor, would teach children catechism at the church; therefore, education was just about church catechization, not independent schooling. Society was urged to establish public schools for two major reasons: 1) Protestants introducing the rite of Confirmation; 2) Protestantism splitting into two strands – Lutheran and Reformed.

During the rite of Confirmation, a young Christian would have to prove before the face of God and the community that they could, in full consciousness, use the spiritual benefits brought to them by Holy Baptism. Therefore, it was not sufficient that participants in the rite of confirmation have had general training – they would have to have studied Bible history and learnt catechism. This facilitated the establishment of an entirely separate academic discipline, which going forward would be known as God's Law. Regarding the second reason, after the Lutheran and Reformed strands of Protestantism finally became fully separate entities and the key principles of both faiths were rigorously and precisely laid down, each camp would now have to focus on entrenching those principles in the minds of the Congregation through familiarizing the people with them. This could be achieved only through the establishment of public schools in the parishes (Rekhnevskii, 1860a: 10). That is how parish schools would emerge in Germany.

As early as 1559, the church constitution in Württemberg contained a provision that parents would be fined if their children “cut class” at the time of catechization (Rekhnevskii, 1860a: 11). Note that regulations of this kind abounded. For instance, in Braunschweig this type of regulation was in place as early as 1528, Württemberg – 1533, and Hannover – 1536 (Polyakova, 2017: 325).

Public schools did not offer many subjects, with the curriculum limited to reading, writing, catechism and church singing and only few schools providing instruction in arithmetic. A school's educational literature at the time was represented by hymnals and catechisms, with short psalters used as well. In 1526, the first complete textbook for initial education and German schools was published. At first, students were divided into three study groups (classes) in the cities; those who could read by letters, by syllables, and those who read fluently.

There were various awards in place to reward the more diligent students. For instance, in Württemberg and in Nördlingen, the teacher would present the best students with a coin and a loaf of bread. A symbol of school discipline was the whip. A new teacher hired by the school would be handed a whip, as a symbolic attribute of the teacher's position, solemnly in the presence of the students (Demkov, 1912).

The public school system had developed in Germany up until the start of Thirty Years' War, i.e. 1618. The first period in the development of the German public school system was now over – but the second period would actually take a while to begin. During the Thirty Years' War, Germany's 16th-century public school system disappeared entirely, with junior deacons turning into soldiers. After the war, most of Germany's regions were in ruins, with the aristocracy devoting little to no attention to issues of public education. The only exception was Ernest I, a duke of Saxe-Gotha and Saxe-Altenburg, who already at the end of the war drew up a plan for creating public schools in all the duchy's communities. Along with the establishment of village schools, the duke had all the churches provide catechization to children and adults. There was a single objective behind both the

schooling and catechization – to revive the weakened religious Protestant spirit (Rekhnevskii, 1860a: 15).

Work related to catechization was conducted by pastors as well. A perfect example is the activity of pastor August Hermann Francke (Fig. 1). The pastor began his activity in 1694 by inviting a group of poor children over to his pastor house for catechization, and eventually instituting a public school via donated funds, as well as funds earned personally, by the time of his death (1727) Francke had created an entire network of facilities, which incorporated the following:

1) A pedagogium, intended to educate children from the upper class, which numbered 82 students, 70 teachers, and several housekeeping staff;



Fig. 1. Pastor August Hermann Francke (1663–1727)

2) An orphan house-based Latin school, which numbered 3 inspectors, 32 teachers, 400 students, and 10 housekeeping staff;

3) A German burgher school, which numbered 4 inspectors, 98 male teachers, eight female teachers, and 1,725 boys and girls;

4) An orphan's asylum, which numbered 100 boys, 34 girls, and 10 male and female supervisors;

5) Free board, provided to 255 students and 360 poor pupils;

6) A bookshop, an apothecary's shop, and a few other edifices, which combined employed 53 housekeeping staff and public officers;

7) A poorhouse for females, which numbered 29 young women and widows (Rekhnevskii, 1860a: 23–26).

In addition, the orphan house incorporated Canstein's Bible Institution. Karl Hildebrand von Canstein was the first to implement the idea of using stereotype printing to publish cheap copies of the Bible for mass distribution (hundreds of thousands of copies) in Germany. The first stereotype edition of the New Testament came out in 1711. By 1795, Francke's orphan house published over 1.6 million copies of the Bible, over 880,000 copies of the New Testament, 16,000 copies of the Psalms, and 47,000 copies of the Book of Sirach.

It is worth remembering that the direction of education at Francke's institutions was mainly religious. Catechisms, the Bible, and ancient languages, especially Hebrew, were the schools' key subjects. Nevertheless, of interest is the fact that Francke's institutions had a major focus on the real sciences as well. More specifically along with catechisms, reading, and writing, burgher schools intended for the education of children from poor families provided instruction in arithmetic, the principles of the natural sciences, geography, and history. The Latin school provided instruction in botany, physics and anatomy. The pedagogium incorporated a natural history classroom, a botanical garden, physical apparatuses, a chemical laboratory, anatomical preparations, lathes, etc. Francke's school for the poor would eventually turn into a public school.

For the first time in history the German public school became organically linked with the Latin academic school. There emerged the conviction that public and academic education ought to rely on

the same foundation and that academic education is only about the further development of public education. In other words, the public school proved synonymous with the elementary school.

Jan Amos Komensky (Comenius) is justly considered the founder of the real dimension in education and learning (Fig. 2). Born in 1592, Komensky attended several universities in Germany. As early as 1616, he became rector of a school in Přerov and was ordained a minister. During the war, Komensky travelled extensively and lived in Poland, Sweden, England, Holland, and Hungary. He wrote and published numerous pedagogical works. The scholar was engrossed in a search of a classic system of education (Marchukova, 2011: 192). Criticizing his era's schools, Komensky would make the following statements: "They spend 15 to 20 years of their lives to learn Latin alone, while paying no attention to what is really beneficial and necessary for them" and "Learning must be natural, facile, and attractive" (Rekhnevskii, 1860a: 32–33). To help implement in practice his real method of learning, Komensky released several textbooks, which would be highly popular in the following 200 years. Among his works, of particular mention is his set of four study guides (Orbis, Vestibulum, Janua, and Atrium) intended to help a learner master Latin as a lingua franca, and subsequently help them learn the sciences and other languages (Bezrogov, 2018: 222). The first real school was founded in Berlin in 1739 by Halle University graduate and Francke Pädagogium teacher, Johann Julius Hecker. Berlin's real school would go on to develop vastly: along with subjects related to gymnasium learning, it provided instruction in geometry, draftsmanship, architecture, mechanical science, engineering, agriculture, and natural science. In 1748, Hecker founded a teacher-training seminary, which was mainly intended to prepare pedagogical personnel for the lower schools of the vast Holy Trinity parish.



Fig. 2. Jan Amos Komensky (1592–1670)

Of importance is the fact that, after watching the Protestants, the Catholic Church would also join the process of creating schools. For a long time, issues related to public education were handled by the Jesuit Order solely (Demkov, 1912). Although the Jesuits were mainly focused on education for the higher strata of society, in countries where the population was in part Protestant, next to Jesuit schools were Protestant public and German schools. They would open up their schools and provide catechesis to the common people as well. Subsequent to the end of the Thirty Years' War, regions where Catholicism was entrenched would eventually witness public schools for the common people going into decline. Subsequent to the end of the Thirty Years' War, regions where Catholicism was entrenched would eventually witness public schools for the common people going into decline. Restoring the public education system in Catholic Germany was now up to Silesian prelate, Johann Ignaz von Felbiger (Fig. 3), who in 1758 was appointed abbot of the monastery of Sagan in Lower Silesia (Rekhnevskii, 1860b: 119).



Fig. 3. Johann Ignaz von Felbiger (1724–1788).

Felbiger set to reforming the public education system by secretly sending three young teachers to a Protestant teacher seminary for training. When they returned, they were appointed instructors at three Sagan schools. To help provide the schools with study guides, Felbiger founded a printery in Sagan, which started to produce school primers, catechisms, and other study books.

In 1763, King Frederick the Great issued 'The General School Regulations' for all of the kingdom's communities. The document was grounded in many of the study guides from Felbiger's printery. On May 12, 1764, a directive was issued on instituting in Silesia a set of teacher seminaries, with the duty of taking care of these facilities vested with parish priests (Rekhnevskii, 1860b: 120–121).

Attending the schools was made mandatory for all young people. As early as 1766, in the Breslau province they opened 128 schools out of 189 planned were in opened in the Breslau Province. Meanwhile, Felbiger worked out a set of instructions on the inspection of public schools, as well as some additional study literature (Belyavskii, 1913).

It is now worth saying a few words about the Austrian system of public education as well. Austria had three major types of public school: (1) regular (in the key cities of each province), (2) major (in all the large cities), and (3) lower (in all the cities, townships, and parishes) (Rekhnevskii, 1860b, p. 131). Austrian regular schools had the significance of higher German real and model schools. They normally had a principal and four to five teachers, including one catechist priest. Each school had four grades. In addition, these schools provided training for primary school teachers.

Regarding major schools had three to four teachers and one catechist priest, and comprised three grades.

Lower schools had one teacher and one to two grades.

All of the Austrian provinces had in place special school committees which oversaw the accurate fulfillment of school regulations.

On May 1, 1774, Vienna unveiled Austria's first regular school. Around the same time, the capital witnessed the establishment of four major and 14 primary schools. Each of the schools had at least 50 students (Rekhnevskii, 1860b: 135). Afterwards, the trend continued on to other regions of Austria.

The period when Felbiger started to put his school reforms into effect in Catholic Germany was the time of dissemination and practical application of the principles of 18th century French philosophy. This philosophy implied breaking the link with past and altering all types of human relations – religious, political, and social. In 1762, Jean-Jacques Rousseau released a treatise called 'On Education', a book that completely changed everybody's view of education. Prior to that, most ideas on education were predicated on religion, with education viewed as a necessary consequence

of Christianity and a way to further develop the religious principles. Its main purpose was to entrench in a disciple's mind the notion of the rule of faith, to make them a worthy member of the Church of Christ and to prepare them for the future, eternal, life. The new pedagogical system, which emerged out of the principles of 18th century philosophy, was distinguished by an aspiration for independence, a refusal to serve as an agent of religious interests, and a focus on educating a person as a human being, as a world citizen, developing in them, in accord with nature, all the material and spiritual powers with which nature has gifted them. Renouncing the focus on enjoying bliss in the afterlife, instead it focused on achieving happiness right in this worldly life through educating children in conformity with nature to help them become righteous and successful citizens.

Among the period's most prominent German pedagogues, the most ardent follower of the new ideas was Johann Bernhard Basedow, born on 1723 in Hamburg. Through the use of his pedagogical techniques, Basedow sought to just help make a person an educated, morally upright and happy individual. His pedagogical essays, with all their significant scholarly value, were seemingly composed in pursuit of financial gain, with a focus on saving up the funds needed to open up a philanthropinum, which he succeeded in doing, accumulating quite a significant sum of money. Basedow's essays produced a major revolution in education, his activity paving the way for eminent Swiss pedagogue and education reformer, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi. Importantly, as early as the late 18th century increasingly more attention was given to innovations in the area of public education (Mamadaliyev et al., 2019: 224). Basedow's followers enriched the German pedagogical literature with their essays, promoting the need for education in all the classes of German society. Personally Basedow was a man of profound convictions who firmly believed in what he was doing and expected substantial results from the implementation of his ideas. Despite being paid a substantial salary, getting gifts from various governments, and having generated significant sums from the sale of his essays, the scholar died in extreme poverty. On his death-bed, he bequeathed his body to an anatomical theater (Obraztsova, 1999), which he saw as yet another way to benefit mankind.

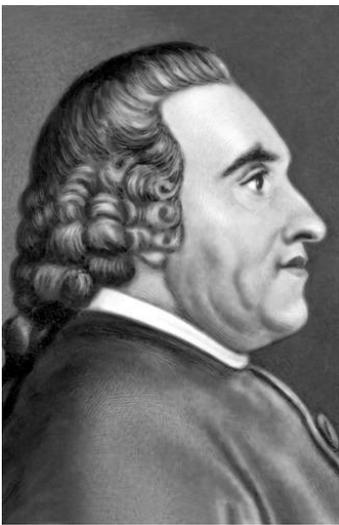


Fig. 4. Johann Bernhard Basedow (1723–1790).

Basedow's strange ideas and pipe-dream plans met with significant success particularly due to the fact that there was a pressing need for education reform in Germany at the time. Despite Felbiger's efforts, Germany's both public and higher education systems were in poor shape (Künoldt, 1897). They were dominated by routine and rigorous discipline, and with learning exclusively based on Latin philology real sciences were virtually not taught.

The educational system propounded by Basedow and his followers constituted a protest against the above-described state of schooling and direction for education, and therefore was a success. Basedow viewed philological and historical education, which dominated the schools at the time, as a key enemy of meaningful education. The scholar demanded that the school stop being a

servant of religious and state interests and be concerned only with educating a person as a human being – by way of real comprehensive learning, enlightening the mind, and physical improvement.

Thus, the educational ideas professed by Basedow in the 18th century had a lot in common with those voiced back in the 17th century by Komensky, which had failed to meet with success back then. Basedow's Dessau Philantropinum, just like other similar educational institutions, had little success and ceased to exist shortly (Piskunov, 1960). However, the intellectual movement and the very polemic engendered by Basedow's school with regard to education benefited German pedagogy immensely. Many of Basedow's followers, including Trapp, Becker, Campe, and Salzmann, created a whole sector of children's literature, enabling the parents themselves, without the school's intermediation, to educate their children in the right way (Rekhnevskii, 1860b: 142). Children's books in 18th-century Germany were a real phenomenon which epitomized the development of children's literature as a whole (Sergienko, 2017: 382).

5. Conclusion

Summing up, it should be noted that during the period between the 15th and 18th centuries German pedagogy had its ups and downs. A setback to the fledging effort to establish a system of public education, first undertaken back in the 15th century, was the Thirty Years' War. The German regions were divided based on religion – paradoxical as it may sound, it is this division that actually first gave rise to competition for congregation, and ultimately acted as a key driver in the process of creation of an extensive network of primary schools.

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