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Modern Trends in the Teaching of the History of Education in Selected Academic Institutions

ABSTRACT

One of the subjects comprising the education of future educators is the history of education. Within the framework of the classes, the students are taught the issues of the Polish and general history of education, namely, pedagogical practice and the history of pedagogical thought. Not only are the achievements of general pedagogy and its sub-disciplines taken into account, but so are the very important achievements of philosophy, sociology, or psychology, due to the interdisciplinary nature of pedagogy.

The article presents contemporary trends in the teaching of the history of education in selected academic institutions. The authors present a reflection on the significance of the history of education as a subject within pedagogical studies. In their analysis of syllabuses (curricula), they indicate two main tendencies: substantive and formal. The former concerns the subject matter of the classes conducted on the history of education, while the latter is connected with statutory and organizational changes which have led to fewer and fewer hours being allocated to this subject and the name of this course being changed.

KEYWORDS

history of education,
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That is why it seems so important to reflect on the role of history education within pedagogical education, understood not only as providing knowledge, but also as a form of development and popularization of pedagogical culture.

Introduction

As is commonly known, the history of education did not appear in curricula until the second half of the nineteenth century. One advocate for its introduction was Ewaryst Estkowski, who wrote that

the history of pedagogy unfolds an intelligent plan before the student, which reverberates from within it; it fills them with content, thus preventing them from committing themselves to the dreams and trials that the educators before them faced, and which their teaching practice exposed as impractical or even ridiculous. (Estkowski, 1849, p. 161)

He also added that the subject

promotes autonomy and facilitates the understanding of the pedagogical principles which the teacher presents as a unified system, as the student internalizes these centuries-old theories, together with the teacher and with the help of the classes, and, in a way, starts viewing them almost as their own beliefs and ideas. (Estkowski, 1955, p. 45)

Thus, Estkowski instituted a reflection on the importance of the history of education in teacher training. This thread was continued later on by Antoni Karbowski, in his article entitled “Notes on Value, Our Expertise, and Research on the National History of Teaching and Education” (Karbowski, 1919, pp. 473–479). Without a doubt, this was when the formation of the history of education took place in Poland. The debate at the time concerned its place in historical and pedagogical sciences, the goals and subject of research in the field, and the research and didactic tasks which it should perform in the future (Jakubiak, 2000 pp. 177–188). It should also be remembered that the conditions in which the history of education developed were in flux and largely depended on the political situation (Hellwig, 2001, p. 77).

The history of education is a pedagogical subdiscipline and an interdisciplinary science, as it straddles the border between history and pedagogy. It uses historical sources to recreate the past of education.

The subject of interest is the history of pedagogical theory—i.e., the history of the development of pedagogical thought and doctrines related to the conceptualization of the educational process—as well as the history of teaching practice, and of educational facilities and institutions. The role of historical education in the curriculum is not only to transmit knowledge, but also to shape the teaching culture (Michalski, 1985, p. 45). According to Stanisław Michalski, its mission is also to introduce students to the attribution of value for historical and pedagogical events, and thus contribute to an in-depth understanding of such events and their incorporation into contemporary trends in pedagogical theory and practice, while shedding light upon the experience of the past.

The article analyzes the syllabuses of the history of education used in several academic institutions in Poland, namely, the Universities of Szczecin, Wrocław, Łódź, Warsaw, Białystok, and Gdańsk, and the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, the University of Silesia in Katowice, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Maria Grzegorzewska Academy of Special Education in Warsaw, and Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. Publications on the teaching of this subject in academic education were also taken into account (Mokrzecki, 2000; Gumuła & Majewski, 2005; Szulakiewicz, 2007; Falkowska, 2017, pp. 49–64; Falkowska & Grabowska-Pieńkosz, 2018). Based on these materials, two main trends in the teaching of this subject have been distinguished: substantive and formal. The former concerns the subject matter of the classes on the history of education, while the latter is related to statutory and organizational changes, which led to fewer and fewer hours being allocated to classes and the name of the course being changed.

Substantive Tendencies in the Teaching of the History of Education

As mentioned above, one of the more important subjects in the education of future teachers is the history of education. Its task, as Stanisław Kot stated, is

to study how different societies organized education at different stages of their development and why they used those particular ones and no other

education systems. Therefore, we look for correlations between the condition of society, its social, political, and economic apparatuses, its moral and mental concepts, the educational ideal, and the practice and theory of education. Merely describing this practice and theory without grasping its connection to life is not enough, as it does not reveal the nuts and bolts of educational work. Only when we establish this connection will we recognize that teaching methods in each era constitute a certain well-founded whole, that all their details strive towards a certain goal; in short, we will discover the pedagogical system of the era. (Kot, 2010, p. 21)

During such courses as teaching practice and the history of pedagogical thought, issues related to the Polish and the general history of education are taught. The students learn not only about the principles of general pedagogy and its subdisciplines, but also—since pedagogy is an interdisciplinary scientific subject—about the principles of philosophy, sociology, and psychology. Based on the analysis of history of education syllabuses carried out in lectures, tutorials, and seminars at selected academic centers, it can be concluded that the content of this subject is taught chronologically, and brings to the fore the importance of selected events in other areas of social life, especially in the broadly defined social and educational activity. The proposed content refers to both the theory and practice of teaching.

Basically, we can distinguish several main trends in the teaching of the history of education. In the first one, historical education places the emphasis on introducing the pedagogical concepts that had a significant impact on the evolution of pedagogy and the emergence of its sub-disciplines. In particular, much space is devoted to familiarizing students with the achievements of the representatives of European and Polish pedagogical thought, using not only the output of education studies, but also of psychology, philosophy, and sociology. The second tendency concerns the knowledge about educational reforms introduced in Poland and in European countries throughout history. In the third one, students learn facts about the activities of various schools, institutions, bodies, and social and educational organizations that had an impact on the functioning of education. The fourth tendency includes issues related to the ideal of education and how this ideal evolved throughout individual epochs. Let's move on to presenting the content of history of education classes which is characteristic of each of these trends.

Referring to the first tendency, it should be noted that in a course on the history of education, students learn about the pedagogical concepts of, for example, Jean-Jacques Rousseau—the forefather of natural education; Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi—the pioneer of the fundamentals of social pedagogy and protective and educational pedagogy; Friedrich Fröbel—a pioneer in the field of preschool education; Johann Friedrich Herbart—the father of pedagogy as an academic discipline; and the representatives of the New Education movement: John Dewey, Maria Montessori, and Ellen Key. They are also taught about the precursors of Polish pedeutology: Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski, Grzegorz Piramowicz, and Jan Władysław Dawid. The curriculum also incorporates the theories of Ewaryst Estkowski and Adolf Diesterweg on primary education, as well as talks about the importance of Maria Grzegorzewska's work in the formation of the theory and practice of special education, and on the merits of Helena Radlińska in the field of social pedagogy. They also hear about the views of the supporters of two educational ideologies of national education during the Second Polish Republic—Stanisław Prus-Szczepanowski, Zygmunt Balicki, and Lucjan Zarzecki on the one hand, and Sławomir Czerwiński or Kazimierz Sośnicki on the other.

The topics discussed during history of education classes also cover educational reforms. Students learn about reforms carried out by the National Education Commission (1773–1794), the reforms enacted in the nineteenth century in the Prussian and Russian partitions, and the efforts undertaken by the National School Council (1867–1921) to revamp the educational system. The circumstances and effects of the laws introduced in the Second Polish Republic are also discussed, including the acts of 1919, 1920, 1926, 1932, 1933, which regulated the functioning of Polish general and secondary education, teacher training, vocational education, and higher education. Another topic is the educational reforms launched during the period of the Polish People's Republic, which were affected by the geopolitical system and the directives of educational congresses, in line with the expectations of the party bloc. Students are also taught about the changes that have occurred in Polish education since 1989—namely, about the provisions of the acts which came into force in the years 1991, 1999, 2005, 2017, and 2018, relating to all types and levels of national education. The knowledge of educational reforms and the circumstances

in which they were implemented can help students to understand and evaluate current events and changes that have occurred in this area.

As part of the history of education, teachers also present the activities of schools, institutions, and significant organizations in the history of Polish and European education. Students learn about schools, starting from those that operated as part of churches (parish, monastic, cathedral, and collegiate churches) and were run by religious orders (Jesuits, Piarists, and Oratorians), through Reformation schools of different denominations in Poland (Lutheran, Calvinist, and Arian) and knightly education to the modern development of public and private education at different levels. The activities of the bodies that have instigated a range of important changes in Polish education are also covered: the National Education Commission, the Education Chamber, the National School Council, the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Education, and—after World War II—the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Ministry of Education and Upbringing, and the Ministry of National Education.

The curriculum also covers the activities of esteemed institutions and organizations for the care of the disabled, the poor, beggars, foundlings, and neglected and troubled children and youth, who disrupt the normative social order. Students are taught about the functioning of various institutions and organizations that support teachers and do distinguished work in reforming education, such as the Society for Elementary Books, the Pedagogical Society, the Society of Higher Education Teachers, the Secret Teachers' Organization, and the Polish Teachers' Union.

The last tendency is to focus on the ideal of education, i.e., the principal goal in shaping a student's personality, which is determined by cultural tradition, social needs, and the dominant ideology. Students are familiarized with the ideals that have appeared throughout history, from the earliest times, i.e., antiquity (the ideal of Spartan education), the Middle Ages (the ideal of chivalry education), to the modern era (the ideal of humanistic education, the ideal of a good and enlightened citizen developed by the National Education Commission [KEN] and propagated by the Polish intelligentsia in the 19th century). Until the 18th century, the ideal was to be a good Catholic, a knight-soldier who loved freedom and cherished

republican traditions. At the turn of the 19th century, the ideal of national education dominated, and after 1926, it was that of a statesman-citizen. The revolutionary shift happened after 1945, when communist notions began to be integrated into education and teaching, and thus the ideal desired by government of the Polish People's Republic was based on the principles of Marxist–Leninist ideology. Democratic changes in the Polish system of education did not occur until 1989, which also had a direct impact on the creation of the ideal of teaching.

In the above-mentioned syllabuses, the work of education historians are of utmost importance, not only the classic ones—i.e., textbooks authored by Stanisław Kot or Łukasz Kurdybacha, for example—but also the latest works written by the next generation of education historians, which perfectly complement the previously unexplored areas. Source texts, which develop literal, figurative, and symbolic competencies related to reading and understanding information are always crucial for history-oriented classes. They provide scaffolds to develop independent skills of thinking, criticism, problem-solving, analysis of events within the framework of educational, social, and cultural phenomena, and discernment of facts versus opinions and truth versus fiction. They are assigned different roles and functions. The source materials proposed during the courses are intended to enrich and deepen the students' knowledge or to confirm facts found in other sources. These texts illustrate and document a wide array problems in the history of education and teaching throughout history. Additionally, they unlock a better understanding of past events. They also make the classes more attractive and stimulate ideologically challenging debates. However, due to the decreasing number of hours allocated to the history of education, it is not possible to get acquainted with the sources or to analyze the texts in detail during the classes. Therefore, it can be concluded that nowadays they are mainly intended for supplementary self-education.

It should be noted that classes in the history of education are not limited only to passive memorization of dates or events, but that emphasis is laid on embedding the content being discussed within a broader context, taking into account social, economic, and cultural factors. As pointed out by Emil Durkheim, a French philosopher, sociologist, educator, and proponent of rooting pedagogical culture

in broad historical foundations, the pedagogical ideal of each epoch reflects the current state of society. Therefore, the essence of studying the history of education is not creating different systems or pedagogical concepts from the ground up, but learning about and understanding the achievements of different people and appreciating their work and the reforms they have initiated throughout history. It is of vital importance to recognize the work and efforts of individual people or entire communities, and to get to know the evaluation process that took place in the past, keeping in mind the circumstances facilitating or disrupting the course of historical processes and events.

It is worth mentioning that the part of the curriculum covered in courses of pedagogical studies that is devoted to the history of education provides a foundation for students and helps them explore the knowledge in other pedagogical subdisciplines, mainly general pedagogy, preschool and early school education, didactics, theory of education, social pedagogy, protective and educational pedagogy, or special needs education. Therefore, the subject, usually taught in the form of lectures, workshops, and students' assignments, is aimed at preparing them to acquire and expand knowledge at further stages of their university education, and consequently for mindful professional work.

Formal Tendencies in Teaching Historical Issues

Issues of the history of education are taught in pedagogical university courses as part of subjects under different names. Generally, in specializations such as general pedagogy or preschool and early childhood education, the academic institutions analyzed for this article use the classic name—the history of education—but there are also such terms as History of Education and Teaching, History of Pedagogical Thought, or History of Teaching and Pedagogical Thought. Along with the development of educational sciences, and thus the expansion of the pedagogical education being taught, history-oriented approaches are also incorporated into special education courses. These include subjects such as History of Special Needs Education, Historical Outline of Disability, History of Special Education, Pioneers of Special Education in History, and History of Disability. The course History of Special Needs Education is related

to the course History of Education and is meant to present the history of the subdisciplines of special education. Students also learn to prepare teachers for special schools and about the important figures in the subdisciplines of special education. In turn, Historical Outline of Disability teaches about the position of people with disabilities in societies throughout different historical epochs. History of Special Needs Education aims to present the history of education of socially maladjusted, blind and visually impaired, deaf and hard-of-hearing children and youth, people with intellectual disabilities, exceptionally gifted people, and chronically ill or disabled people. In turn, Pioneers of Special Education in History classes present the profiles of the pioneers in special education, their scientific achievements and their contributions to the founding and development of educational institutions against the background of historical events. The history of disability touches on issues of teaching and education of people with disabilities throughout history, as well as discussing the pioneers of research on disability in Poland and Europe. These are just some examples of the history of special education becoming an independent discipline. This isolation of the history of special education as a separate subject in teacher training can be observed as a sustained trend in teaching the history of education.

When analyzing the subjects offered by selected academic institutions, for several years now, we can note a significant reduction in the number of hours devoted to teaching the history of education in Departments of Pedagogy, which prepare teachers for professional work. Usually, between 15 and 60 teaching hours (lectures and workshop) are allocated to these courses, sometimes only in the form of lectures. In the wake of such significant time constraints, it is often impossible to present all the content of the history of education or the history of special education. It should also be noted that in the descriptions of these subjects, the instructors clearly indicate that the knowledge acquired during the classes is useful in practice. They stress that after completing the course, the student should be able to use interdisciplinary theoretical knowledge to identify and interpret complex and atypical problems related to teaching, education, and social care in different historical periods.

As the number of hours allocated to this part of the curriculum has dropped, the community of historians of education has tried to

incorporate historical topics into various levels of academic training for future teachers. Students and doctoral students (students of first-, second-, and third-cycle studies) come across historical approaches as part of such classes as History of Social Care, History of Social care and Education (selected concepts of protection and education throughout history, the tradition and evolution of protective and educational systems in Poland and in the world), and Pedeutology (analysis and interpretation of selected pedeutological concepts and their creators throughout the 19th and 20th centuries in Poland). Moreover, historians teach such courses as Historical Research in Pedagogy, Methodology of Historical and Pedagogical Research (historical research in pedagogical sciences, in particular the search for and interpretation and evaluation of information contained in historical sources), and Biographical Research in Pedagogy (the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to biographical studies in pedagogical sciences). Students also participate in classes such as Founders of Polish Pedagogical Thought (the most prominent Polish pedagogical thinkers in different historical epochs and the ideas that they disseminated), Old-time Children's Games and Toys, and Games and Toys in the Education of Children (issues related to the importance of games and toys in a child's life at different stages of development, taking into account the achievements of Polish and European educators and socio-educational activists). These are just some examples of university courses for future teachers which include a historical perspective.

It is worth mentioning that since the mid-1990s, there has been a gradual limitation and removal of historical content from pedagogical university courses. Karol Poznański, an outstanding historian of education, has asked a very important question: "Is it possible to build a broad pedagogical culture without knowing Polish educational traditions and the European achievements of education and teaching?" Referring to the experience of academic practice, he has also stated that almost all education studies "bear the stigma of ahistoricity" (Poznański, 1995, p. 41). This is a paradox, because the development of educational sciences and the augmentation of the curriculum for future educators is evident.

We must point out that knowledge about history, even basic knowledge, is needed by educators as well as pedagogy students in

teaching specializations such as physics, biology, and philology (Majewski, 2002, p. 50). A gradual withdrawal or even elimination of historical content from pedagogical courses deprives the students of an important cornerstone, which representatives of other pedagogical disciplines often refer to. Even before the Second World War, Hanna Pohoska noted that

opponents of “historicism” in teacher education want to build pedagogical knowledge *in abstracto*, in isolation from real life. They do not realize that such a break with historical tradition is a break with the present day, because it casts pedagogical theories and psychological inquiries into some void of abstraction. (Pohoska, 1935, pp. 10–11)

Besides, we must agree with Jerzy Topolski, who—in his book *World Without History*—put forward the paramount thesis that “historical thinking is a component of culture, without which it would not be possible to construct action plans and without which an active attitude to the reality surrounding us would remain unchanged” (Topolski, 1998, p. 33). For that reason, the contemporary teacher should be aware of the legacy of the Polish state in the field of education, as well as its contribution to European culture. One example is the establishment of the University of Krakow, which was the second university established in Central and Eastern Europe, after the University of Prague. In turn, the achievements of KEN, the first Ministry of Education in the history of Europe, were a model for other European countries in reforming their school systems. Even today, the activity of KEN is the paragon of achievements in the field of education on a European scale. It is also worth mentioning that the movement of New Education led to something of an overhaul of schools, the curriculum, and the teaching methods by putting the child and their needs at the center of educational influence. These are only selected elements in the curriculum for future educators, the teaching of which is helpful not only in describing historical educational practices, but above all in explaining and evaluating events from the past. It should be pointed out that knowledge of the history of education is undoubtedly important in the process of building the identity of teachers.

Conclusion

To conclude, it can be said that the history of education is one of the most important pedagogical subdisciplines, because it allows the students to learn about the predecessors and distinguished activists who had a fundamental influence on the creation and development of pedagogical subdisciplines, including preschool pedagogy, early childhood education, social pedagogy, and protective and educational pedagogy. While taking these courses, the students become aware of the processes and conditions in which education took place in different epochs and cultural circles. They also have the opportunity to learn about the factors that influenced the development of science or the formation of mental and moral/religious trends. Knowledge of history allows us to objectively assess the participation of different nations in the development of pedagogical knowledge and practice as well as educational phenomena and their impact on humans throughout history. This aims to logically buttress the material to be taught and organize it into structural wholes, which offers a broader look at the pedagogical curricula and deepens and expands the content conveyed at further stages of studies. Such an attitude has a positive effect on structural thinking, as it helps combine existing knowledge with new information, and this in turn contributes to the growth of intellectual culture.

It is also worth noting that the historians of education face a difficult task related to the progressive “de-historization” of curricula used in pedagogy. After all, the history of education is the only subject in the course of studies that illuminates problems related to education in a broad context, against the backdrop of social, cultural, economic, and moral/religious aspects. The selection of the content carried out in the course of classes makes students aware of how difficult the art of education is and how many factors it depends on. Therefore, we should not make hasty conclusions about pedagogical work, and while practicing this profession, teachers must be careful in the selection of didactic and educational tools and methods. During classes in this subject, students will learn about the tradition and the achievements of education sciences over the centuries, the circumstances of the development of education and teaching, and the position that Poland occupied in the history of educational theory and practice

in Europe. It must also be mentioned that the history of education, based on pedagogical experiences from the past, integrates other pedagogical disciplines.

Bearing these findings in mind, it is worth recalling the opinion of Julian Dybek, who argued that

Each teaching process, especially pedagogical, should have visions or concepts of the graduate, of the human being it wants to shape. Generally speaking, it should be said that this graduate should understand the world, that the university should also help them understand themselves, teach them to work on their own character, which we constantly forget about. This graduate should also gain an understanding of others, especially their future students—especially young pupils. Studies in pedagogy should impart wisdom about the world, and about people. (Dybiec, 2012, p. 3)

Without knowledge of the history of education, this task may prove to be difficult to accomplish.

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