

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ART EDUCATION IN LATVIA FROM 1890 TILL 1990

Mākslas izglītības attīstība Latvijā no 1890. līdz 1990. gadam

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Abstract. *Art education is a very important field, as it represents the ethical and esthetical needs of the society and reflects the politics and ideology of the age.*

The urgency of art education and cultural education is affirmed also by the fact that the year 2009 was announced as the year of innovations and creativity in Europe. It is necessary to research the possibilities the art education can offer to promote the creativity of young people and to improve the quality of art education. The overview of the history of art education gives us the possibility to find connections between different conditions as well as examples of the best practice. The development of art education is divided into three stages within the period from 1890 to 1990: founding of the first establishments of art education at the end of the 19th century (1890 – 1915), development and growth of the establishments of art education during the independence period in Latvia (1915 – 1940) and changes brought by the time of occupation (1940 – 1990). This period shows the development of art education in three different contexts of social, economical and political ideology, giving us the opportunity to see their influence on the development of the cultural and spiritual life of Latvians.

The aim of the research: to gather and analyze the main tendencies of the development of art education from 1890 to 1990.

Methods of research: analysis of the scientific literature and sources.

Keywords: *art education, pedagogical activity.*

Introduction

The important role of art education in forming the skills of young people in the 21st century is acknowledged by the European Union, evidenced by the suggestion of the European Commission to accept the cultural plan of Europe, affirmed in 2007 by the Board of the European Union. The plan emphasises the meaning of art education to promote creativity. Also the strategic basic viewpoints of European Union, determining the cooperation between European countries in the fields of education and teaching for the next decade, emphasise the meaning of general skills, among them also such skills as understanding of culture and creative work.

Art education as a specialised branch of education is a purposefully organised field of acquiring and passing on historical experience and cultural values, mastering of systematic knowledge and skills, shaping the identity, opinions and values of a personality as well as the sum and result of the corresponding practical activity (Pedagoģisko terminu skaidrojošā vārdnīca, 2000: 73). Artistic education is a theoretical and practical knowledge of art. The task of this knowledge is not only to prepare the artists, but also the audience (Students, 1998: 243 - 245).

There are several possible subjects of art education: music, visual arts, dance, theatre, media arts, crafts, and architecture. In this research the author is analyzing the opportunities to learn visual arts in Latvia in different periods of history.

Eurydice in their survey of the situation of art education and cultural education in 2007/2008 in Europe reveals the main tasks and aims to be developed: artistic skills, knowledge and understanding, critical evaluation/esthetical evaluation, the acknowledgement of cultural heritage, national identity, expression of individuality, cultural diversity, creativity” (Arts and Cultural Education at School in Europe, 2009).

In order to accomplish these goals, it is necessary to understand the factors possibly fostering their achievement and those hindering it. Researching and analysing the previous

teaching experience serves well for this purpose. The professional skills and the growth of the creative potential of emerging artists are largely based on the principles of art education and pedagogical methodology.

Researching the development of art education in Latvia from the mid-19th century to the late 20th century, it is possible to find connections between the social changes and changing artistic trends, as well as to see the tendencies of modern art education and methods in the European and world-wide context.

Art education in Latvia till 1990 can be divided into 3 stages:

- 1) 1890 – 1915;
- 2) 1915 – 1940;
- 3) 1940 – 1990.

The development of art education ideas in each of these periods are discussed below.

Beginnings of Art Education in Latvia (1890 – 1915)

At the end of the 19th century art education in Latvia was promoted by the following factors (Anspaks J. (2003); Anspaks J. (2004); Birkerts A. (1927); Dauge A. (1926); Latvijas Mākslas vēsture 1840 - 1890, 2011):

- 1) spreading of the topical art - theoretical ideas via theoreticians studying in Western Europe and translations of original writings;
- 2) development and improvement of practical skills of Latvian artists in art schools of St. Petersburg;
- 3) Collecting of ideas derived from the heritage of Latvian folk art and transforming them in the professional art.

Already starting from the 16th century, people from the Baltic lands start to establish closer contacts with the cultural and scientific centres of Europe, and young people from wealthy families go to study at the well - known universities of Prague, Rostock, Paris, Erfurt and others (Anspaks, 2003: 45). At that time the spread of pedagogical ideas by Jan Amos Komensky (1592 - 1670) was especially important throughout Europe. His regulations of school operation and new understanding of teaching significantly change the theory of education and practice also in Latvia.

Progressive and essential changes in Latvia's cultural and educational life become evident with the rise in economy and cancellation of serfdom in the mid-19th century. But already some decades before Latvian intellectual circles start to emerge, also having their ideas on the meaning of education, cultural heritage and art education in the spiritual growth of the individual and nation. Neo-Latvians also pay attention to the wide range of questions of art education. Juris Alunāns, Krišjānis Barons, Kaspars Biezbārdis, Atis Kronvalds, Andrejs Spāģis, Krišjānis Valdemārs and Auseklis stand firmly for Latvians' rights to maintain their national culture, to receive good education, to develop the native language and literature, and to draw inspiration from the sources of other peoples' art and science (Anspaks, 2004: 30). The ideas of Neo-Latvians are voiced also in the newspapers and magazines „Mājas viesis“, „Sēta, Daba, Pasaule“, „Pēterburgas Avīzes”.

Since the mid-19th century, under the influence of Enlightenment movement, Latvians also notice their possibilities to take part in the solving of social, cultural and educational problems. The first institution of art education – Riga Trade School of Craftsmen's Society (*Gewerbeschule des Rigaer Gewerbe-Vereins*) in which decorative arts and design is taught alongside painting and drawing, is founded by the craftsmen of German origin in 1872, and all the teaching is in German. But already one of the school's graduates, Jānis Lakše-Laksmanis, opens the School of Building and Art Trades in 1883, supported by the Riga Latvian Society. Carpenters, woodworkers and painters are trained there. Also the Baltic German painter Elise Jung-Stilling establishes the drawing school in 1883, later taken over by

Riga city and transformed into Riga City Art School (1906 - 1915). Many Latvian and German artists (Janis Rozentāls, Bernhard Borchert) teach at the school, but in 1909, to raise its professional level, the noted painter Vilhelms Purvītis was invited to take the director's office. He reformed and democratised the school, also improving teaching aids and promoting the activity of pedagogical work (Latvijas Mākslas vēsture 1890 - 1915, 2011). The definition of pedagogical activity emphasises that it is a value-oriented, purposefully considered training carried out by the teacher who plans, organises and leads the process of learning and upbringing (Pedagoģisko terminu skaidrojošā vārdnīca, 2000: 126).

Although the development of the school is interrupted by the First World War in 1915, Riga City Art School has managed to lay the foundations for the future Latvian Academy of Art, both from the viewpoint of management and teaching methods. In the late 19th century some other establishments of art education are founded. Many later well-known Latvian artists study at the School of Drawing and Painting (1895 - 1915) established by Venjamin Blum who has come to Riga from Odessa. For some time the school has certain success in the pedagogical field of academic art. Blum is a follower of the Russian school of Realism, being very negative towards innovations, including Vilhelms Purvītis' teaching methods. Thus the first disagreements and different opinions regarding the methods of art education become evident. On the one hand, it can be perceived as a mutual intolerance between the representatives of different art styles (Russian Realist school and Impressionism), but another significant tendency shows in the development of art schools established in the late 19th century – management and pedagogical work is taken over by Latvian art educators who prove to be more responsible and successful in their duties in comparison with Germans or Russians.

As national self-confidence grows throughout the society, also the interest in and demand for studying art is on the rise. In the beginning of the 20th century many Latvian artists open their private studios and establishments of art education: the private studio of Johann Walter in Jelgava (1898 - 1906.), the studio of drawing and painting (1904 - 1914) led by Jūlijs Madernieks, the studio of Janis Rozentāls in Riga (1906 - 1910) and others (9).

By gathering and analyzing the information about the art education from 1890 to 1915, it is possible to conclude that in the late 19th century, in spite of the social inequality and national enslavement as well as complicated economical conditions, Latvia progressively joins the cultural life of Europe. The interest of Latvian intellectuals in the Enlightenment ideas in regard to education also raises the interest of the society in the development of education and culture. The acknowledgment of the values of national culture gives strength to the spiritual activity of the nation; at the same time, the best possibilities for artists to develop their professional skills are appreciated – all taken together promotes the advancement of art pedagogy in Latvia.

The Development of Art Education in the Period of Latvia's First Independence (1915 - 1940)

In the early 20th century a new trend in pedagogy emerges: art pedagogy movement, based on the idea of increasing the courses of drawing, singing, music and literature that would help students to develop their artistic taste, inspire creative inclinations and abilities, and lay the basis for the development of artistic culture.

The origins of art pedagogy coincide with the rapid development of educational theory in the early decades of the 20th century. In Europe and the USA, art education becomes the carrier of new ideas and the agent of alternative school reform projects. Many Latvian writers and poets, for example, Rainis, Fricis Bārda, Pēteris Birkerts, Antons Birkerts and Vilis Plūdons, focus on the role of art in the development of personality. Rainis looks at the artistic

upbringing in close connection with a radical democratisation of culture and reforms in school life.

Important insights about art and its role in the person's intellectual development are also found in the writings of most renowned art theoreticians of the early 20th century Aleksandrs Dauge, Pauls Dāle and Jūlijs Aleksandrs Students. They encourage art teachers to create more relaxed and unrestrained relationships with students, reminding that successful pedagogical activity is based on every teacher's creative growth and continuous perfection, as well as stress the necessity of art lessons in schools in order to advance the full development of every personality and society in general. Their art-theoretical and philosophical inspirations come from the founders of art pedagogy in more advanced European countries and the USA, like John Ruskin (England), Georg Kerschensteiner and Heinrich Scharrelmann (Germany), Corado Ricci (Italy) and John Dewey (USA) (Anspaks, 2003: 34).

Aleksandrs Dauge (1868 - 1937) focuses on popular currents of reform - oriented pedagogy in Europe and else where, gaining a lot of important ideas to be used in art teaching. He learns from the German teachers by reading and analyzing the works of Kerschensteiner and Scharrelmann, as well as by visiting Germany, which he called “the land of teachers and schools” and participating in practical lessons of art. After visiting different art lessons and observing the work and methods of various teachers, Dauge evaluates the effect of different factors on students' creative abilities. He appreciates the work and methods of German teachers, oriented towards fostering observational capabilities of students, independent taste, self-discipline, self-criticism, and above all the joy of creativity.

In his book *Māksla un audzināšana* (“Art and Education”) (Dauge, 1925: 7) Dauge stresses that “there are rules and deep internal order in art as well. In the teaching of art, aims are also set and verifiable methods used”, thus not favouring artistic inspiration over theory and practice. In his view, the essential feature of the educated personality is a strong and uncompromising nature, which helps to carry out ideas and prove their value in the real work.

The well-known Latvian philosopher and psychologist Pauls Dāle (1889 - 1968) has made a significant contribution to the development of theoretical basis of general and art education. Dāle sees education as a prerequisite for the formation of spiritual culture, as well as emphasising very close educational and cultural interaction. (Anspaks, 2003: 272 - 275). He explores the conditions of forming spiritual intellectuals in close relation to the general and artistic education and acquirement of cultural values, as well as delineates the ways to raise the quality of general and artistic education. He stresses that the primary concern of the art teacher is to liberate the understanding of beauty in children, to develop aesthetic thoughts and feelings, encourage creative inclinations and abilities. This can happen only if the teacher himself is a masterful, skilled, highly professional person with a well-developed pedagogical and spiritual culture (Anspaks, 2003: 279).

Latvian philosopher, psychologist and teacher Jūlijs Aleksandrs Students (1898 - 1964) has made an important contribution to art education. His pedagogical concept is based on the recognition that aesthetic education and artistic education are not only separate instructional or educational tools, but the core of the development of each person and society in general. Students emphasises (Students, 1998: 243 - 245) that science and art studies allow to explore the wholeness of human experience and brings under investigation the potential and content of sciences and arts to lead the personality into the diverse world of truth and beauty, highlighting the aesthetics as a basic science of pedagogy.

Students' focus on art pedagogy problems is determined by the mission set by the epoch – to strengthen the spiritual power of personality. The position of Students in respect to the school's strategic objectives is strong and unshakeable: the aim of education and upbringing is not to prepare a person for material wealth and sensual pleasures, but to create a personality with an identity. Also in education it is necessary to overcome the narrow

tendencies of practical concerns, utilitarianism and pragmatism which are damaging to the personality (Anspaks, 2003: 263).

An important moment in the development of Latvian art education is the founding of the first institution of higher learning in art in 1919. Despite the fact that in the 1920s the need for an academic education is even disputed – the defenders of modernist ideas from Riga Artists' Group see in it the conservative academics' wish to dominate the art scene – the first institution of higher education in art, the Latvian Academy of Art, was opened in 1921. In the times of the first Rector Vilhelms Purvītis the structure is modelled after the sample of the Academy of Arts of St. Petersburg and there are 7 studios: Figural Painting, Landscape Painting, Decorative Painting, Graphics, Sculpture, Applied Sculpture and Ceramics. At the beginning of the 1920s a number of younger generation artists take positions as teachers at the Academy of Art. Their creative work shows knowledge of the latest trends of Western European art, at the same time links with the foundations of national art are also kept alive. Among the young teaching staff there are painters Konrāds Ubāns, Valdemārs Tone and Ģederts Eliass. In the 1920s – 1940s also such artists as Ludolfs Liberts, Jānis Cielava, Jānis Liepiņš, Emīls Melderis, Leo Svemps, Oto Skulme, Uga Skulme and Sigismunds Vidbergs taught there (Burāne, 1989: 45 - 49).

At the University of Latvia, founded in 1919, there is the Faculty of Architecture with three studios of architecture and one general art studio. The studio heads' artistic tendencies and interests affect the choices of students. In 1923 the Drawing and Painting Studio is founded at Riga People's University. A number of artists teach the basics of painting and drawing at their private studios (Valdemārs Tone (1919 - 1923), Jānis Roberts Tillbergs (1923 - 1944), Uga Skulme (1923 - 1927), Kārlis Miesnieks together with Ludolfs Liberts (1924 - 1929)). The principles of training and orientation are directly related to the teacher's understanding of the nature and values of art. Since the 1920s the opportunities for art education emerge outside Riga as well – in 1926 Liepāja School of Arts and Crafts is founded. The students learn compositional principles and the use of various styles, emphasising the heritage of Latvian folk art (*Latvijas Mākslas vēsture 1915 - 1940*, 2011).

Also very creative and professional, high-quality teaching of arts is provided in comprehensive schools, as most of the best known Latvian artists earn their living by teaching drawing and painting in the gymnasiums of Riga and other towns.

This is a controversial time, when the Latvian people has just regained their national consciousness and economic situation in the country has stabilised, but there are also unpleasant tendencies in the society – exaggerated desire for material wealth, thus gradually creating new obstacles to the spiritual and cultural development. However, the period of independence of the Latvian state undoubtedly is the time when the cultural life of the Latvian nation flourishes, manifesting itself in the more thorough elaboration of the art education and pedagogical ideas and their wide practical application.

Art Education in the Years of Occupation (1940 - 1990)

This period in the history of Latvian culture especially vividly shows the art education's close relationship to and even dependence from the political power and ideology. Starting from August 1939 when Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact is signed, the development and growth of independent Latvia in economic, social and cultural fields is not only stopped but, to a large extent, destroyed.

“Huge losses in the nation's spiritual culture are caused by deportations and continuing repressions or forced exile of teachers, educators, scientists and artists, by the complete denial of the values of culture and art pedagogy, and dismissal of the national culture and world's scientific achievements” (Anspaks, 2003: 35).

Both the officials of German occupation and the representatives of Soviet punitive institutions are convinced that, in order to reduce the possibilities of Latvian national resistance movement, it is necessary to extinguish the national school traditions cultivated in the period of Latvia's independence, to suppress students' and teachers' creative spirit and to subject the educational system to the “new ideals”, producing uniform citizens obedient to the totalitarian power.

„The arts are not autonomus realms of activity, uninfluenced by the social context. They are supported by patronage, controlled by censorship and disseminated by education: and the character of these systems reveals a great deal about the society of which they are part“ (Arthur D. Efland, 1990: 4). Analyzing the scientific literature and sources, it is evident that during the Soviet occupation there is well-organized educational system as well as carefully worked-out criteria of ideological and artistic value of the work of art. However, this does not mean that artworks are devoid of value – often Latvian artists prove their talent in spite of ideological pressure. The inclusion of many good artworks in exhibition lists is also guaranteed by the expert commission of Latvian SSR Ministry of Culture which largely work according to professional criteria (Anspaks, 2003: 370; Strods, 2010: 332 - 355).

Although the Soviet system of control is felt in the corridors of the Academy of Art, however, in the period up to the late 1940s, thanks to the Rector Oto Skulme and the talented teaching staff of departments of Drawing, Painting, Ceramics and Sculpture, students learn not only the workmanship of the chosen profession, but also a serious and responsible attitude towards it. Artists and art teachers find the means to develop their creativity as well as ways of teaching and passing on their skills to students. (Burāne, 1989: 15).

Practical development of various artistic skills is not the only course of the training program at the Academy of Art – the understanding and role of art theory is supported and promoted at the Department of Art History and Theory. Here students acquire comprehensive knowledge in art history as well as receive a deeper understanding of art's development and styles. (Burāne, 1989: 104).

The greatest collisions start in the early 1950s when, implementing the method of Socialist Realism, the structure of the Academy of Art was undermined substantially; it also affects tragically the fate of many good teachers – Ģederts Eliass, Leo Svemps, Jānis Liepiņš, Arturs Apinis and others are fired. Destruction of traditions drags on in the 1960s, but in the early 1970s, thanks to teachers' creative work, it is possible to solve many problems and stabilise the educational system.

Pedagogical ideas of Aleksandrs Dauge, Jūlijs Aleksandrs Students and Pauls Dāle do not lose their topicality, perhaps their implementation is more difficult but, thanks to many important and talented teachers, they have been put into practice and found their followers in Soviet Latvian art education. (Anspaks, 2003: 373).

In the beginning of the 1960s, new departments are opened at the Academy of Art (Burāne, 1989: 95-101) – Textile, Interior, Industrial Art Departments as well as the Department of Pedagogy. The main task of the Pedagogy Department is to prepare the teachers of painting and drawing for the comprehensive schools. Graduates of this Department teach in every region of Latvia and they are the ones who introduce their students to the world of art (Burāne, 1989: 101).

So we can conclude that also in this period the teaching staff holds on to the traditions of independent Latvia, improving them and keeping the high professional level, although the diversity of possibilities and methods was narrowed by the isolation from the latest trends of Western European art.

Throughout the history, there have been constant changes and coexistence of different art trends, also different pedagogical approaches have developed in art education. Art teacher, being also an artist, confirms it in his pedagogical work.

Similarly, diverse opinions on the methods of art training are ever present because the principles and techniques of how to teach art are associated with the degree of individualisation of this process, the development of technologies and personality.

The development of culture, as it is emphasised by Aleksandrs Dauge (Dauge, 1926: 65), depends on many different objective circumstances (economical, social, political, etc.), from real social forces, influencing the development of education and spiritual culture, although you should never forget the subjective factor – each person can use even objectively negative conditions for a spiritually valuable and creative self expression.

Conclusions

All three periods manifest an explicit link between the art education trends and the economic, social and cultural developments. But art education processes clearly reflect any changes in pedagogical theory. This connection is evident in the beginnings of art education in the mid- and late-19th century. The inspiring factor of these processes is the first Latvian national awakening and awareness of the nation's cultural heritage. It is also promoted by the opportunities for Latvian youth to study in the best European universities, and the integration of received impulses in the national teaching culture. But such opportunities emerge only with the improvement of Latvians' social status and economic conditions. This suggests that the striving for culture and education comes forward together with the nation's self-consciousness, but practical solutions are arrived at as a result of economic and social improvements. In this period Latvians are still looking for their chances and ways to create art education and prove their abilities in art pedagogy and practice.

Also, during the first independence, the awareness of national culture and traditions plays an important role. In this period, outstanding Latvian writers, philosophers, pedagogues, and psychologists are very productive, contributing also to the development of art pedagogy in Latvia. As a result of the cultivated art education theory and general economic growth, Latvian children and young people have many options to study art without leaving Latvia. In Riga and some larger towns there are schools, studios, and higher learning institutions in which one can obtain education comparable to that provided by European and Russian establishments. Works of many later recognised Latvian artists testify to the high level of art education during the independent Latvia.

In the period of Soviet occupation the influence of political power and related ideology upon cultural processes, including art education, becomes most evident. Isolation from the European culture limits the diversity of training methods, thus restricting the developmental possibilities of future artists. Still the organised control of education and criteria of artwork's ideological and artistic value cannot interrupt the rapid growth in art education. The high level in this field was maintained during the occupation period, thanks to the experience of the independence time and upholding of traditions in art education.

Kopsavilkums. *Mākslas izglītība ir ļoti nozīmīga joma, jo tā pārstāv visas sabiedrības ētiskās un estētiskās vajadzības, tā atspoguļo katra laikmeta kultūras politiku un ideoloģiju.*

Mākslas izglītības un kultūrizglītības izpētes aktualitāti apstiprina arī tas, ka 2009. gads tika pieteikts arī kā Eiropas Radošuma un inovācijas gads. Tāpēc nepieciešams ir pētījums par iespējām, kuras mākslas izglītība var sniegt jaunatnes radošuma veicināšanā un mākslas izglītības kvalitātes pilnveidošanā. Mākslas izglītības vēstures pārskats dod iespēju ieraudzīt dažādu apstākļu kopsakarības un noteikt labākās prakses piemērus. Šajā pētījumā mākslas izglītības attīstība tiek analizēta trīs laika posmos periodā no 1890. gada līdz 1990. gadam: pirmo mākslas izglītības iestāžu veidošanās 19. gs. beigās (1890 - 1915), to attīstība un uzplaukums Latvijas brīvvalsts laikā (1915 - 1940), kā arī pārmaiņas okupācijas gados (1940 - 1990). Šis periods atklāj mākslas izglītības attīstību trīs dažādos sociālās, ekonomiskās un politiskās situācijas kontekstos, tādejādi dodot iespēju ieraudzīt to ietekmi uz latviešu tautas garīgās un kultūras dzīves izaugsmi.

Pētījumā izmantotā metodika ir teorētiski apkopot un analizēt mākslas izglītības attīstības galvenās tendences no 1890.- 1990. gadam, zinātniskās literatūras un avotu analīze.

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