

HUMANITARIAN FOUNDATIONS OF THE CONTENT OF EDUCATION AT RIGA CLASSICAL GYMNASIUM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE “EUROPEAN DIMENSION IN EDUCATION”

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Abstract. *In the 21st century, humankind has realised that the future of civilization is related to the development of education. A person capable of acquiring knowledge and applying it creatively, as well as being able to participate in the process of creating and using new knowledge, can only be prepared by an effective future-oriented system of education. Novelty of the research refers to the development of the structure of the content of education in the gymnasium as the relationship between didactics (knowledge and skills) and culture. Culture is viewed as the interconnection of three cultures: social experience (universal human values), the culture of a student, and the culture of a teacher. Research problem is the determination of the essence and structure of the content of education in the gymnasium in accordance with the new humanitarian paradigm of education as the relationship between didactics and culture, the basis for the development of student's personality. The aim of the research is to analyse the humanitarian foundations of the content of education in the gymnasium in the context of the “European dimension in education”. The research method is theoretical analysis. The results of the research are as follows: the humanitarian foundations of the content of education in the gymnasium have been determined; the essence and structure of the content of education have been elaborated. On this basis, an effective system of profile education has been created for the development of student's personality as a future professional and a European citizen having moral values. The present study leads to the conclusion that the humanitarian foundations in the content of education correspond to the “European dimension in education”.*

Keywords: *democratization, humanitarian approach, humanitarian model, humanization.*

Introduction

The topicality of the research is related to global trends in the development of human society in the field of education. In the 21st century, humankind has reached the conclusion that the future of civilization is related to the development of education. A person capable of acquiring knowledge and applying it creatively, as well as being able to participate in the process of creating and using new knowledge can only be prepared by an effective future-oriented system of education. New knowledge quickly becomes obsolete in a society characterized by mobility, multiculturalism, and multilingualism. Therefore, faster development of education becomes the main pre-condition for the transition of civilization to a new level of quality.

The research problem concerns the content of education in the gymnasium, developed in accordance with the new humanitarian paradigm of education, where the structure of the content of education is viewed as the relationship between didactics and culture, the principles for the creation of education content: humanization, humanitarian approach and democratization substantiated in contemporary didactic theories (Čehlovs, 2011; Neimatov, 2002), the interdisciplinary approach as the interrelationship of various school subjects (Alijevs, 2005), the creation of a system of profile education on this basis, the development of the personality of a gymnasium student in this process, and educating a European citizen, a person possessing high moral values.

The aim of the research is to analyze the humanitarian foundations of the content of education in the gymnasium in the context of the European dimension in Education.

The novelty of the research refers to the following: the structure of the content of education has been defined as the relationship between didactics (knowledge and skills) and culture. Culture is viewed as the inter-relationship of three cultures: social experience (universal values), the culture of a student and the culture of a teacher. The creation of a system of profile education is regarded as the basis for the development of a future professional and a citizen of Europe.

The research was based on the culturological approach and the personal activity approach. The research method is theoretical analysis.

European dimension in education: reorganization of the traditional educational system

The development processes in new Europe entrusted educators with the task of preparing people who will live in the expanding system of pan-European cooperation, intensive exchange of information and the products of human labor. The universal cultural values reflected in the legislative documents that underpin the educational policy in Europe constitute the basis for cross-cultural interaction.

Thus, Article 149 of the Treaty Establishing the European Community (European Union, 2002) and the Charter of Social Rights, amended by the Council of Europe in 1989 (Council of Europe, 1996) speak of a common policy in secondary and vocational education, of the centralization and decentralization of the system of education. The Treaty Establishing the European Community uses the term “European dimension in education”. The European dimension in education primarily refers to a new experience that stimulates new orientations in education and is implemented by all European partners. It is based on the values and methods of active and alternative pedagogy, research in social psychology, anthropology, and communication sciences.

General characteristics of the European dimension in education are openness (to other levels of education, social environment, contacts, and connections), expansion of partnerships (formation of an educational community), and improvement of the quality of education, considering international evaluation criteria, etc.

The key features of European education also include the development of individual’s moral values and qualities in the democratic society, the development of an active creative personality, the development of technological culture as part of individual’s general culture, the important role of child’s personality in education, and the spread of the ideology of homocentrism (Ross, 2003).

The content of the European Dimension in Education

The content of the European dimension in education manifests itself in three postulates adopted in the concept of European education.

The first postulate suggests that a student is an active subject with individual features, abilities, and aspirations inherent only to him/her. This is a person who discovers and creates culture in the society where he/she lives, independently shaping himself/herself and becoming a free citizen. The task of education and upbringing is to teach the young person to change the conditions of life, to improve them, not to accept them passively as a gift from the previous generations.

The second postulate proclaims that the socialization of the individual takes place in a multicultural society characterized by diversity and interdependence. The classical definition of culture as the totality of the social conditions of the environment transmitted from generation to generation in the form of beliefs and values, through language and other systems of symbols (Matsumoto, 2007; Ross, 2003) becomes insufficient. In the European concept, contemporary culture is a set of interacting cultures, a space of human coexistence.

The third postulate shifts the emphasis in the process of “learning-teaching” from the teacher to the learner and declares real life and direct experience to be the first sources of modern learning. Thus, learning should be closely connected with contemporary life; it should be an active and collaborative process. Human personality is total and is not limited to knowledge and erudition.

The existing system of education, however, is mainly focused on obtaining knowledge, on the formation of a specialist rather than on the development of personality. In this case, education is really reduced to learning without feedback. This leads to the conclusion that it is necessary to refute the postulates of traditional pedagogy like authority, discipline, and competition and accept new modern ones: freedom, activity, and collaboration.

Reorganization of the traditional system of education

Reorganization of the traditional system of education is associated with a crisis in education. According to the European concept (UNESCO, 1998), the characteristic features of the crisis in education are as follows:

- the crisis of education is rooted in its dehumanization, in isolation from human values;

- another reason for the crisis in education is the predominance of the traditional, i.e., informational approach in education, the main focus in which is the transfer of knowledge to students, which results in a passive audience alien to creativity;

- according to the European concept, the goal of education is the development of the individual and the stimulation of creativity, especially creative thinking, orientation towards education in the full sense of the word, while traditionally teaching comes first.

The way out of the crisis can only be based on the humanistic paradigm of education. Humanization is a socio-cultural position that proceeds from the priority of a human being as the highest value, which implies the restructuring of entire culture, and hence the education system, in the direction of homocentrism.

In this respect, the humanitarian approach to education is very important. The humanitarian approach to education is humanism in action, aimed at overcoming technocracy, the destructive impact of which on culture has become obvious. The essence of the humanitarian paradigm is in the organic combination of professional training and education. After all, education is the development and nurturing of personality, and teaching is a means to achieve this goal (Senko, 2000).

Changing the paradigm of education

A change in the paradigm of education is inevitable in the changed conditions of life. The essence of this change is the transition from a person as an object of education (a passive receiver of information) to a person being a subject of education, capable of self-education. The new paradigm of education involves the transition from the utilitarian pragmatic goals of education as a set of knowledge and skills necessary for successful participation in the production process to the humanistic goal – to the subject and his/her personal development.

The implementation of this goal involves other mechanisms – not just the acquisition of the socio-cultural experience of humankind, which is very important, but also the self-formation of personality and its self-actualization through the production of experience (knowledge), which has a dual nature: the individual-personal and socio-cultural experience of humankind (Ross, 2006; Chehlova, 2006). It is important that this reorientation inevitably leads to the humanization of pedagogy itself, which considered science as the main value of education for a long time. The new pedagogy should focus not only on science, i.e., the rational way of cognizing the world, but also on culture in its entirety. The focus on the synthesis of didactics and culture is seen as the essence of the new paradigm of education in the gymnasium.

The modern concept of education at Riga State Classical Gymnasium in the context of the European dimension in education

Riga State Classical Gymnasium is an institution of secondary education in the Republic of Latvia. It is an educational institution that provides an opportunity to obtain secondary education in accordance with student's creative abilities, the needs of society, the state of Latvia, and the European Union. The activities of Riga State Classical Gymnasium are conducted based on the principles of humanism, science, creativity, and democracy, in accordance with the General Education Law of the Republic of Latvia, and the concept of the European dimension in education

developed by joint efforts of experts from the European Union and the Council of Europe.

In accordance with the European dimension in education, the aim of education in the gymnasium is to develop a person who will become a European citizen and a professional: a person with high moral values, professing tolerance and pluralism, appreciating the cultural heritage of community, a participant in the process of European integration, a creative and cultural personality.

The objectives of education at Riga State Classical Gymnasium are as follows:

- education of universal moral values;
- acquisition of the Latvian national culture, its traditions and heritage;
- mastering the cultural heritage of Europe and world cultures;
- identification and development of the creative abilities, talents and spiritual interests of gymnasium students;
- the presence of an “I-image” which combines the European and national identities;
- education of democratic and moral ideals (tolerance, understanding, and solidarity), as well as the ideals of the European community;
- being active and creative;
- being able to adequately assess the situation and make a decision;
- collaboration, working in a team, exploring;
- being the subject of democratic relationships and conscious civic activity (having qualities of citizenship) (Alijevs, 2021).

The content of education in the context of the new humanitarian paradigm of education

The concept of education has been elaborated based on contemporary scientific ideas and in accordance with the European dimension in education. The development and upbringing of a personality in accordance with his/her potentialities is the main factor underpinning the content of education. The structure of the content of education is analogous to social experience and, apart from knowledge and skills, it also includes culture. According to the European concept, contemporary shared culture integrates humanistic, technological, and scientific components. Shared culture is characterized by openness and breadth. It includes moral values, the experience of creative activity, and the experience of emotional value relationships. The structure of the content of education in the gymnasium represents the relationship between didactics (knowledge and skills) and culture (Ross, 2003; Čehlovs, 2011).

The content of education as a relationship between didactics and culture is presented in the humanitarian model of education.

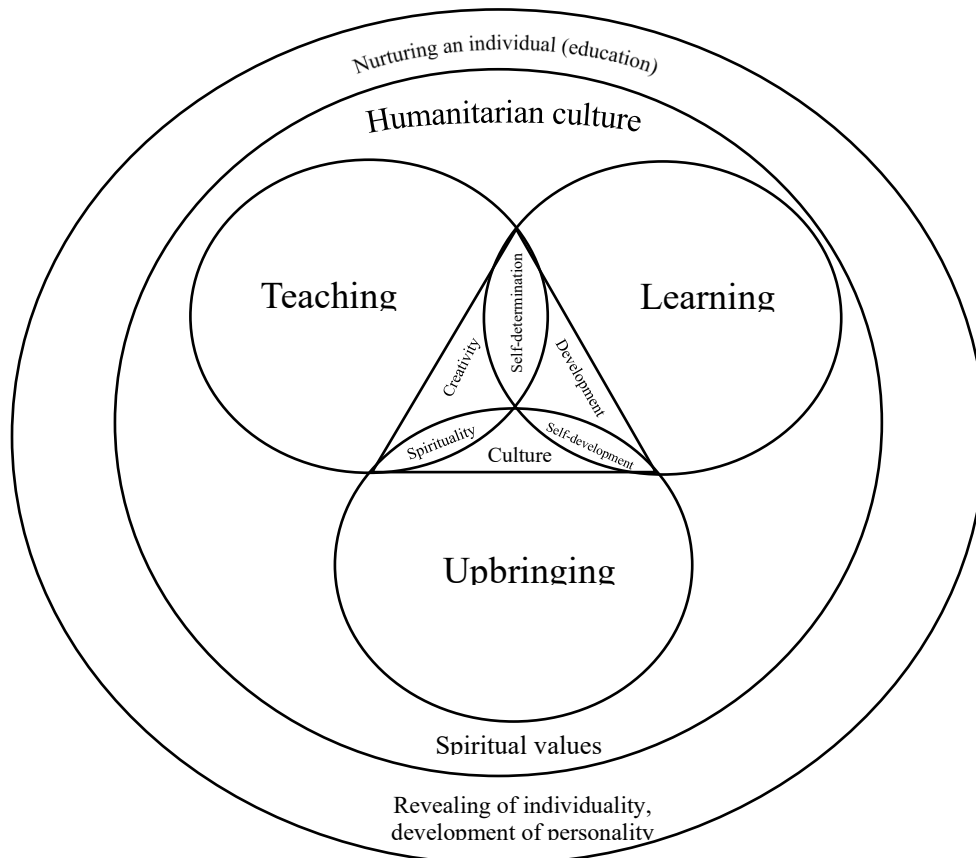


Figure 1 **Humanitarian model of education** (Čehlovs, 2011)

The humanitarian model of education reflects the key relationship of the educational process “teaching-learning”. Teaching and learning are two essential aspects of education that define its main didactic context. The connection between teaching and learning occurs in the field of humanitarian culture and is based on spiritual values. A dialogue is a necessary pre-condition for the joint creativity of a teacher and learner. In the dialogue, the rigidly fixed social roles of the teacher and learner disappear. It results in the revealing of individuality, the development of personality, and the upbringing of a person (Čehlovs, 2011).

The content of the educational process is presented as the relationship of three cultures: social experience (moral values), the culture of the student and the culture of the teacher.

The cycle of educational activity

The humanization of education as an approach to its construction requires the analysis of not only statistical, but also dynamic relationships between its components. The most important principle in creating the content of education is the unity of the content and procedural aspects of education. On this basis, the cycle of educational and cognitive activity was developed, representing the procedural interrelationship between teaching and learning (the activities of the teacher and the activities of the learner). Analysis of the cycle of educational activity helps both the teacher and the student to better understand their own activities and contributes to their effective implementation.

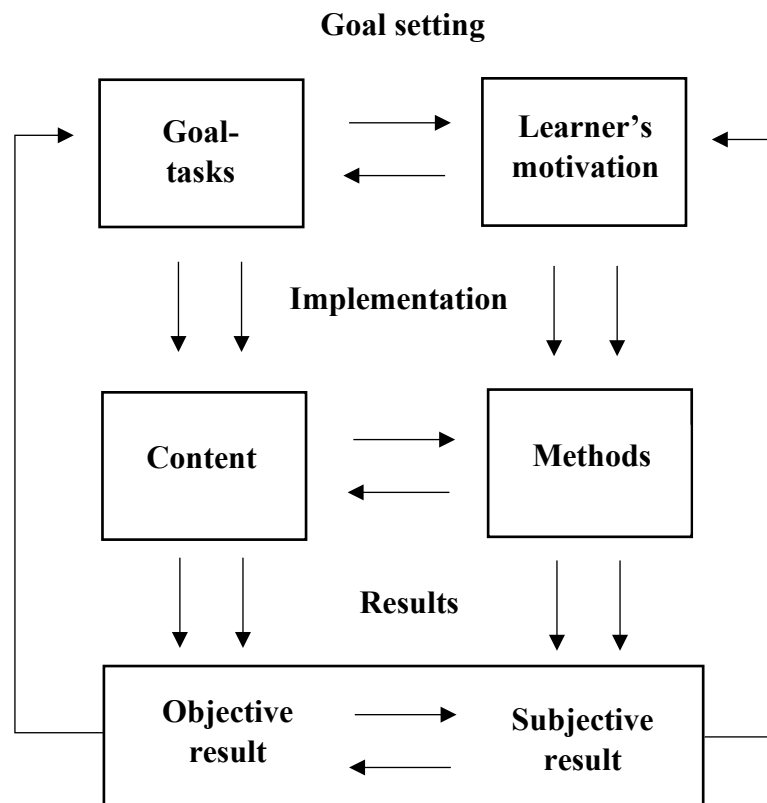


Figure 2 *The cycle of educational activity* (Čehlova, 2002)

Principles of designing the content of education in the gymnasium

Jan Amos Comenius proposed the general principle of the content of education - “the principle of the nature of conformity”, i.e., the content of education should correspond to the nature of the child. This allowed Comenius to determine the purpose of school “to be a workshop of people”, a “workshop of humanity, where

people become the people who are wise in mind, moral in their actions, and pious in their heart” (Komenskij et. al., 1988).

The leading principle is the correspondence of the content of education in all its elements and at all levels to the age characteristics of learners, their needs for self-development and the development of their individual potential. This principle means that the place and functions of each school subject are primarily determined by the principal goal – development of the personality of gymnasium students in all richness of their inner world, in accordance with their main self-determination tendencies.

The most important principles in constructing the content of education are the unity of the content and the procedural aspect of education, the principle of the correspondence of the content of general secondary education at all levels to the requirements of society, the modern principles of humanization and democratization.

The humanization of education in the gymnasium presupposes an emphasis on universal human values in the content of education, the facilitation of the acquisition of world culture, as well as the promotion of universal and national values. The humanization of education is a shift towards a person (a learner and a teacher) with the aim of developing personality as a whole rather than just knowledge and skills. This does not mean complementing the existing system of education but its radical transformation. In the gymnasium, humanization is implemented through the consistent individualization of the entire pedagogical process, considering the individual characteristics of the gymnasium students and individual characteristics of the personality of teachers.

The humanization of the educational process is underpinned by a number of conditions:

- ensuring the unity of emotional, creative, social and moral foundations in the content of education;
- free communication of the participants in the educational process;
- freedom to choose the content, methods and forms of activity;
- the subjective position of a gymnasium student in the process of learning;
- freedom of choice regarding the educational profile.

These conditions were implemented in the gymnasium through the organization of variable profile education based on the elaborated content of education in all departments.

The humanitarian approach to education involves a turn to humanitarian issues, to humanitarian culture with the person and his/her problems at the center. It implies the use of the humanitarian layer in the general scientific and technical disciplines (McCorkindale, 2018). The humanization of education makes it possible to overcome tendencies towards technocracy. The humanization and humanitarization of education in the gymnasium are ensured by focusing on contemporary European

culture and world culture, history, and spiritual values. The humanitarian approach to education is humanization in action (Neimatov, 2002; Senko, 1998).

Democratization involves mutually interested and creative collaboration between the teacher and learners, the development of their initiative and creative activity, and the involvement of parents in tackling issues concerning the development of the gymnasium. Democratization implies the emancipation of pedagogical processes, changing their very essence based on mutual understanding, trust, and collaboration. The gymnasium teachers are provided with the conditions for creative planning and organization of work, free choice of forms, methods and means of pedagogical activity, as well as the involvement of the gymnasium students and parents in this activity. Democratization involves the creation of the most favorable conditions for the identification and development of the abilities of each gymnasium student and for their self-determination, proceeding from the need for deeply humane relationships between teachers and students based on mutual respect. It implies teacher's concern for the development of the personality of each gymnasium student, for satisfying their interests and needs.

The principle of democratization is based on collaborative pedagogy. Only in the process of collaboration are gymnasium students able to reveal their potential and abilities and develop their desire for self-education. In the conditions of collaborative pedagogy, the most common forms of work and methods used in the gymnasium are those that develop critical thinking, introspection, and a creative approach to learning. The process of learning involves the formulation of problems, their creative solution, finding ways to overcome contradictions, the formulation of judgments and evidence, as well as the use of various research methods.

To implement the content of education in the gymnasium, three types of pedagogical strategies were identified:

- the first type of strategy is characterized by an orientation towards the development of the integral qualities of the personality of gymnasium students as modern citizens of united Europe;
- the second type of strategy is focused on expanding, improving and enriching the social experience of gymnasium students (mobility, tolerance, multiculturalism, multilingualism);
- the third type of strategy is characterized by an orientation towards the interests of gymnasium students, elevating them to the level of value orientations and simultaneously enriching the experience of self-knowledge, self-determination, and self-actualization. The professional orientation of gymnasium students is also important.

The elaborated curricula involve such forms and methods of learning as disputes and discussions, seminars, lectures, practical classes, study tours, dialogue lessons, interviews, and internship.

An innovation in the Latvian system of education is the development and implementation of a system of profile education in a gymnasium. The education profiles correspond to the socio-economic development of Latvia, as well as the interests of students, their abilities and aspirations. The education profiles offered in the gymnasium are the following: International Relations, Economics and Finance, Media and Production, Design and Technologies, General Medicine, Engineering, Computers and Technologies (Alijevs, 2021).

The specific feature of profile education, which determines its exceptional status in the educational process of Latvia, is the relationship between theory and practice. This is what distinguishes the educational program of Riga State Classical Gymnasium from the programs of Latvian secondary schools. In our opinion, an increase in the number of hours allocated for the study of separate subjects alone cannot be called profile education.

Experience has shown that the effective development of the personality of gymnasium students is possible in the conditions of profile education. This type of education in a gymnasium makes it possible to eliminate students' overload and to expand the scope of application of the abilities of gymnasium students in a particular field of knowledge at the same time. Profile education enables gymnasium students to objectively assess the correspondence of their abilities to the requirements of the chosen profession. Therefore, an important component of profile education is practical training. The cooperation of the gymnasium with the Latvian institutions of higher education like the University of Latvia, Riga Stradins University, and Riga Technical University is important. Practical training contributes to the development of personality, increases motivation, and stimulates desire to work in the chosen profession. Profile education also provides opportunities for research activities of gymnasium students and elaboration of their research projects.

The gymnasium uses innovative methods and forms of organizing its educational work based on the inter-disciplinary approach. This approach is at the heart of creative projects. This is a new approach to the study of problems and subjects. It implies active participation in real socially significant activities, getting to know new trends in the development of society through research and reflection activities, and through practice. The use of creative forms of learning like debates, discussions, seminars, lectures, as well as the combination of individual and group

activities, are important and relevant to profile education. A research society has been established, where the problems of scientific research and its results are discussed.

Conclusions

The process of education at Riga State Classical Gymnasium is based on a new humanitarian paradigm of education focusing on the development of student's personality. The structure of the content of education in the gymnasium represents the relationship between didactics (knowledge and skills) and culture. Culture in the content of education represents the relationship of three cultures: social experience (universal cultural values), the culture of a student and the culture of a teacher.

The humanitarian paradigm of education is presented in the humanitarian model of education. Its content and procedural aspects have been determined. The basic principles for developing the content of education are humanization, humanitarian approach, and democratization.

The development and implementation of a system of profile education in the gymnasium is an innovation in the Latvian system of education. The specific feature of the content of profile education, which determines its exceptional place in the educational process of Latvia, is the relationship between theory and professional practice. The study leads to the conclusion that the humanitarian foundations of the content of education correspond to the European dimension in education.

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