Pedagogy in Slovenia at the Beginning of the 20th Century: Identification of Several Dilemmas

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Abstract
Pedagogy in Slovenia gradually won its recognition as an academic science, and therefore obtained improved possibilities for its conceptualization, when the university in Ljubljana was established in 1919. The time between the two world wars was marked with three principal pedagogical concepts: Herbartianism, *geisteswissenschaftliche* pedagogy, and reform pedagogy. The first of these to be theoretically conceptualized in Slovenia was the *geisteswissenschaftliche*, or cultural pedagogy. Ideas of reform pedagogy, especially its social-critical movement, interpreted, represented, and defended primarily left-oriented pedagogues and teachers, who were convinced that actual school reform would be possible only after (revolutionary) changes of social conditions. In the first decades of the 20th century, numerous conflicts and disagreements occurred in the process of establishing individual pedagogical currents and orientations in Slovenia. The strongest and most productive polemics were held between *geisteswissenschaftliche*, or cultural pedagogy, and some currents, or just individual representatives, of reform pedagogy (e.g., theory vs. praxis, old vs. new school). Unfortunately, the postwar Marxist pedagogical concept was highly unfavorable to the prewar orientations and prevented their further development.

Keywords
education, Herbartianism, history, pedagogical concepts, reform pedagogy, Slovenia

Introduction
Every science has phases in its development when it is pre-occupied with its internal problems, and is employed with itself instead of researching and expanding its own field of interest. Social sciences and humanities, as in the case of pedagogy, are susceptible to specific situations—they must maneuver between the demands of politics and their obligations to the scientific truth. Subsequently, they often find themselves in an unenviable situation, in which they are criticized from both outside and inside. In the course of its development, Slovenian pedagogy has encountered periods of rapid development and external encouragement, as well as periods of disapproval and condemnation (Vidmar, 2009).

In the article, we will analyze and discuss beginnings, as well as first attempts of the theoretical conceptualization of Slovenian pedagogy as a science in the time between both World Wars. As we will see, different issues and problems of pedagogy first began to be identified and thematized in the analyzed period. We would like to propose that, although there were also disagreements and disputes between major pedagogical movements or concepts, they were allowed to be developed regardless of their ideological background and origin until World War II. Unfortunately, with the sociopolitical and economic changes after the war, pluralistic and productive continuity of pedagogy was broken and the new Marxist pedagogical concept in Slovenia was very averse to the majority of the prewar pedagogical movements and concepts.

Crisis of Pedagogy as a Science at the End of the 19th Century
At the end of the 19th century, the character of the field of education, as well as many other fields of social life, was such that it fell into an evident crisis, which was primarily revealed as crises of traditional school forms, the ideal of education, and pedagogy as a science (cf. Heman & Moog, 1921; Reble, 2004). The crisis of pedagogy as a science can be connected with a rejection of Herbartian pedagogy (Herbart, 1908; Rein, 1893), which was predominant at that time, and which did not find a way to successfully avoid the danger of exaggerated intellectualism and formalistic

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mechanization. In the resistance and “fight” against such science-oriented pedagogy, pedagogy itself was rejected as a science. At the beginning of the 20th century, pedagogy was actually still very closely connected with philosophy, and was in the process of emancipation, searching its own fundamentals in leaning on some recently founded sciences, such as psychology and sociology. It was also simultaneously understood as a practical and applied science, and had to affirm itself in a continuous competition with “traditional” sciences.

One of the consequences of the uncertainty in education, pedagogical theory, and praxis of that time, was the emergence of new movements, which could be categorized as reform movements or reform pedagogy. These movements were very heterogeneous and, according to their objectives, often diametrically opposite, but they all had one characteristic in common: a criticism, or even condemnation, of the existing “old” school and traditional pedagogy.

Establishing Pedagogy as a Science in Slovenia

Slovenes did not have their own pedagogical–theoretical tradition until the beginning of the 20th century; they primarily took pedagogical–theoretical concepts and practical solutions from elsewhere, with a shorter or longer delay. The establishment of the university in Ljubljana in 1919 actually enabled the gradual acceptance of pedagogy as an academic discipline in Slovenia, and consequently improved possibilities for its conceptualization and development. Slovenian pedagogical thought and its practical implications and solutions were under the strong influence of German pedagogical concepts between the world wars, because of tradition. However, American and Soviet educational ideas, and, above all, their practical solutions, also began to gain influence during this period.

In Slovenia, pedagogy began to be conceptualized as a scientific and theoretic discipline in the mid-1920s, when the University of Ljubljana also began to exert an affirmative influence on the self-confidence of the pedagogues–practitioners. Unfortunately, until the first half of the 1930s, only one full-time professor of pedagogy was employed at the University of Ljubljana; after 1933, one professor and one assistant professor worked at the university, and both developed Slovenian pedagogical theory, as well as encouraging the practical activity of teachers (Vidmar, 2009). During this time, individual pedagogical concepts were consolidated through frequent and sharp public polemics, conflicts, and discussions.

It is only recently that new views of the establishment of the Slovenian pedagogy between the two world wars have begun to win recognition inside the field of education (Medveš, 2000; Vidmar, 2002). In earlier times, Slovenian pedagogy did not spend much time on this topic; as far as it thematized the time of conceptualizing Slovenian pedagogy, it mostly accepted the established interpretative paradigm of the situation at that time without any consideration, which consistently objected to, and rejected, those pedagogical concepts, orientations, and movements, which could not be justified through Marxist interpretation (Schmidt, 1947, 1969; Strmčnik, 1979).

Postwar interpretations of the first decades of the 20th century actually reproached representatives of pedagogy at the University of Ljubljana for a lack of a sense of praxis and of exaggerated inclination to theory, instead of interest in practical pedagogy. The fact is that pedagogy was understood as a science at universities all across Europe at that time, which was fully in accordance with the Humboldtian concept of university (Humboldt, 1904; Rüegg, 2004). Slovenian pedagogy at the University of Ljubljana did not differ in any aspect, but the fact was that Slovenia did not have a sufficient number of theoretically competent experts who would have had the motivation and appropriate knowledge to apply theory to the praxis. It is curious that the aforementioned postwar interpretations also characterized negative the situation at universities in the United States (Schmidt, 1947), although, for example, J. Dewey, as a university professor, transferred his theoretical concepts directly into praxis in his Laboratory School in Chicago.

A classification that has recently been gaining recognition will be used in the article; it divides pedagogical orientations and currents at the beginning of the 20th century into Herbartianism, reform pedagogy, and geisteswissenschaftliche, or cultural pedagogy. However, we must be aware that strict divisions and classifications cannot be made, because when analyzing some of the prominent pedagogues, who themselves declared their affiliation to a certain pedagogical orientation, we can also find some essential elements of another orientation(s).

In the following, we will analyze major dilemmas of pedagogy in Slovenia in the first decades of the 20th century, based on the main conflicts and polemics between the most important orientations, with an emphasis on cultural and reform pedagogy.

Herbartianism

Some of the earliest texts indicating the active knowledge of pedagogical theory, and which represent some kind of beginning of equal integration into European pedagogical currents, were connected with development of Herbartianism in Slovenia. One of the first to write more systematically about pedagogy as a science was Henrik Schreiner, who was also one of the most prominent representatives of Herbartianism in Slovenia. He acquainted the broader professional public with Herbartianism, although he himself was not its exclusive and radical defender (Vidmar, 2002).

At the beginning of the 20th century, Schreiner wrote about the meaning of pedagogy as a scientific discipline,
which was “inclusiveness of such scientific knowledge and rules of the art, which guarantee us, as the praxis teaches us, proper governing and proper education of youth” (Schreiner, 1902, p. 2). For him, the principal mission of pedagogy was to find an answer to two questions: What is the objective of education and which are the proper ways that lead to this objective (Schreiner, 1902)?

The founder of pedagogy as a science or “scientific pedagogy” was, as Schreiner was convinced, Herbart. Scientific pedagogy should lean on “ethics or the science of morals,” “psychology or science of the soul,” and two “auxiliary” sciences, which are “physiology” (the science of life of living creatures) and the “science of health” (Schreiner, 1902, p. 2). Pedagogy is not only a science but also an art (Schreiner, 1902; 1919).

People often confuse the terms education and instruction, which even leads to unpleasant misunderstandings. For Schreiner, “education” was a superjacent term, while “instruction,” in contrast, was subordinate and understood as one of the means of education (Schreiner, 1902, p. 3). A very important educational means is work:

Every work, physical and intellectual, is of the same value as [the] educational and general educational mean. The “working instruction” does not mean [a] new school subject, but rather [a] special method. […] Activity of pupils should be the educational principle, not only the school subject. (Schreiner, 1919, pp. 50-51)

These thoughts could easily be placed in the concept of work school.

In 1903, polemics about Herbartian formal steps began in the school. The initiator of the polemics with prominent Slovenian Herbartians was Viktor Bežek, who himself had attended the lectures of Wilhelm Rein, one of the most important Herbartians, in Jena. Bežek did not oppose Herbartian “articulation” of the instruction, but was averse to the dry formalism and routine work, as it was impractical and useless for with-life-connected school instruction and inappropriate for all subjects, for all contents and each lesson, especially in the way it was practiced in Carniola (Lužar, 1920). Bežek repeated and continued these polemics on different occasions.

Herbartianism lost its importance after the 1920s, and was primarily viewed as obsolete, and no longer played a significant role. Cultural pedagogy and reform pedagogy declared themselves as being against Herbartianistic formalism.

**Cultural or Geisteswissenschaftliche Pedagogy**

*Geisteswissenschaftliche* pedagogy had in common a supposition that essential questions of education could not be solved on the level of technique and organization of the instruction or learning, but only on the basis of the education and cultivation of the teacher, who should be capable of understanding his time and its spirit (Blankertz, 1982; Dilthey, 1986; Medveš, 2000). *Geisteswissenschaftliche* pedagogy developed several orientations, of which, at least in Slovenia, so-called cultural pedagogy gradually prevailed. Since then, both terms have been used more or less synonymously. As in Germany, where *geisteswissenschaftliche* pedagogy originated, cultural pedagogy in Slovenia was developed primarily at the University of Ljubljana, which enabled it to achieve a high scientific status (Protner, 2000).

The founder and most prominent representative of cultural pedagogy in Slovenia was Karel Ozvald, who was the first professor of pedagogy at the University of Ljubljana, where he remained until 1945. The other most eminent representative of cultural pedagogy was Stanko Gogala, who was a private lecturer at the university between the two world wars. After World War II, he succeeded Ozvald (Vidmar, 2009).

The definition of the essence of cultural pedagogy, which was developed and used in the time between the two world wars, states that each culture, and each society or community, has a certain “face” and a “soul,” which is filled with a certain “spirit,” and that spirit is called a “spirit of time” (*Zeitgeist*). Each period and society also has its typical educational ideal. The most important means of education are so-called educational values, which are actually cultural values. However, every cultural value is not simultaneously also an educational value, because an educational value is just a cultural value that a person experiences in such a way that “he is personally touched by it, and which helps him [in] forming his humanity” (Brumen, 1936, p. 107; cf. Čibej, 1928, pp. 117-118). A mission and a duty of pedagogy are to identify the spirit of the time and to help transform cultural values into educational values.

*Geisteswissenschaftliche*, or cultural pedagogy, was, as are the majority of other pedagogical concepts, homogeneous in principles, fundamentals, and in general paradigm, but its representatives in Germany, as well in Slovenia, differed in defining singular details and in planning solutions. For example, Gogala was convinced that the school must “lead spiritual and normative” life but cannot and must not accept cultural values from real life (Gogala, 1933, p. 108). Conversely, Ozvald was convinced that “the duty of the school is not to lead a life, but: to go along with life, not to lag behind it, but to listen and to consider its demands, that is, to prepare youth for life” (Ozvald, 1927, p. 141). They were both decisively convinced that a close relationship or contact should be established between the teacher and pupil, but Ozvald believed that a direct contact of “two souls,” that is, the teacher’s and the pupil’s, was impossible “in [the] existing school” (Ozvald, 1927, p. 138). For the representatives of cultural pedagogy in Slovenia, pedagogical theory was a scientifically founded and philosophically absorbed clarification of a pedagogical reality (Ozvald, 1939b).
Furthermore, cultural pedagogy extended its field of work and interest in pedagogy to adults, as it stated that although a child is a central point of pedagogical activity, it is not about “childish” matters, but about “andra-gogy,” that is “guiding of an adult” (Ozvald, 1939b, p. 12).

As already stated in the “Introduction” section, in the first decades of the 20th century, many conflicts and disagreements occurred during the process of establishing individual pedagogical currents and orientations in Slovenia. The strongest and the most productive polemics were held between cultural pedagogy and some currents, or just individual representatives, of reform pedagogy. In Slovenia, the ideas of reform pedagogy interpreted, represented, and defended primarily left-oriented pedagogues and teachers. Consequently, polemics were unfortunately sometimes rather ideologically accented and politically interpreted.

Reproaches Regarding Exaggerated Interest in Theory and Neglecting Praxis

Representatives of cultural pedagogy were harshly criticized by some of the representatives of reform pedagogy as being too preoccupied with theory and spending too little time helping teachers in their practical work (Gogala, 1938). Gogala was even convinced that there were artificially and intentionally created tensions and conflicts within “so-called academic and idealistic theory” (Gogala, 1938, p. 145).

As the most important defenders of pedagogical theory in a pejorative sense, Ozvald, Gogala, and Šilih were held up as the representatives, or at least the adherents, of cultural pedagogy (Gogala, 1938). Against the background of such reproaches, praxis should not be too little considered, but a wish and a demand for a different pedagogical theory, a demand for imposing another pedagogical paradigm: “First opposition to our pedagogical theory also does not origin in theoreticity itself, but in a demand for another pedagogical theory” (Gogala, 1938, p. 145). The most zealous opposers of cultural pedagogy, which was theoretically the most developed pedagogical orientation in Slovenia between the two world wars, were above all the defenders of a certain ideology:

It is a peculiar world view, which is close to the materialism and which a priori and theoretically denies every idealism, every single reality at all, which would not be of material nature. This world view . . . is another reason for such zealous opposition against pedagogical theory in Slovenia. If I express myself more correctly, is this yet again the opposition against pedagogical theorists, who are not followers of this world view and who should only because of this recede to the work of others. This attack against the pedagogical theory therefore means just [an] attack against a world view of idealism and against a recognition of dual reality of the world, a spiritual and a material one. And since the world view of a theoretical materialism is very intolerant, therefore its followers also do not tolerate different workers and producers in the pedagogical-theoretical field. They would want, that in a Slovenian pedagogy, in the theory as well in the praxis, only a materialistic world view would come into force and consequently also a practical-pedagogical work would become unified, i.e. ideologically unified. (Gogala, 1938, pp. 145-146)

Their biggest problem was that they used negative means and methods to gain their popularity, and used arguments ad hominem instead of arguments ad rem (Gogala, 1938). In the altered sociopolitical situation following World War II, the burden of the aforementioned statements and the associated guilt fell on Ozvald, who was superannuated in 1945 and died in 1946; however, the actual author of these sharp statements remained the university’s professor of pedagogy in Ljubljana.

Polemics About the “Old” and the “New” School

One of the most typical polemics and debates during that time was that regarding the “old” and the “new” school, in which Ozvald and Gogala were involved on one side, and Osterc, who denounced Ozvald, was situated on the other. The polemic began with an article written by Ozvald with the title “New” School and with a response by Osterc, one of the most radical defenders of reform pedagogy and its social-critical orientation. The polemic continued with Ozvald’s answer to Osterc and with Gogala’s answer, in which he also defended a very hardline position.

Ozvald was convinced that a conceptual structure of the “new” school was not something entirely new and first given, as its defenders often claimed, because it was, in essence, about “old thoughts, offered in new form,” and that had been true since the Enlightenment (Ozvald, 1930, p. 130). He stated that defenders of the “new” school entirely rejected the “old” school, “because only [the] ‘new’ school is the right one, but the ‘old’ one should [be] extinguished, as it is just a classroom or better a torture-room without the tiniest sense for freedom” (Ozvald, 1930, p. 130). He had no doubts that on the tree of the “old” school were numerous “wild sprouts,” which branched out too much and should be chopped off, because they unnecessarily “sip out [the] sap of a school organism” (Ozvald, 1930, p. 132). As examples, he mentioned the accumulation of shallow knowledge (or didactical encyclopedism), mechanization, the conviction of a teacher in his superiority and infallibility, and immoderate intellectualism (Ozvald, 1930). As a culmination of his view, he elaborated the thesis that the “old” school and the “new” school are, in fact, not necessary alternatives, which means that a mental frame of the existing school should not be “broken” at the introduction of a new school, “because a school will in its basis always remain—a school” (Ozvald, 1930, p. 132). The principle of “originating in the child” (vom Kinde aus) does not demand that one should “as a trash reject everything that is included in the words: authority, duty, discipline, modesty, norm (rule)” in school life, because these
are the cultural principles, and without them, one cannot imagine interacting with life in highly developed periods and societies (Ozterc, 1930, p. 132).

Osterc polemically answered Ozvald by asserting that each period, in fact, has its educational ideal, but the author unfortunately gave up “deeper analysis of the period” and did not penetrate into “spiritual roots” of modern life, and therefore also did not find deeper motives of the new school and its essence; he remained “always on [the] surface” (Ozterc, 1930, p. 138). He also stated that Ozvald saw only external signs of a “new” school, such as concentration, home-orientation, (domorodnost), and the work principle, and that he entirely mechanically defined the “new” school in opposition to the “old” one (Ozterc, 1930, p. 139). At the same time, Osterc admitted that Ozvald criticized not only the new school but also the old school; however, even there, he remained only on the surface (Ozterc, 1930). It is obvious that Osterc had a problem with Ozvald’s impartiality and eclecticism in an effort to unite the good aspects of the “old” and the “new” schools (Ozterc, 1930, p. 139).

Osterc’s language was personally offensive, as he reproached Ozvald about his lack of analytical force in valuing the “new” school and also a lack of “objectivity and balance, which is necessary for scientific work,” which is why Ozvald’s paper looked like a “kind of combative psychosis,” which “forces[s] him partly to the distortion of notions and partly veils him [from] a clear view of the problem,” and that is why his final verdict did not have “all prerequisites to become decisive” (Ozterc, 1930, p. 140).

Gogala’s answer soon followed. He generally took much harder positions than Ozvald in the confrontation with the representatives of the radical orientations of reform pedagogy. Gogala was convinced that the “new” school realized that in schoolwork, the pupil should be considered in addition to the teacher, and that it also began to realize that the school was “the institution of a child and it is created for him” (Gogala, 1930, p. 263). On the basis of these premises, schoolwork should be organized in a way that corresponds to the psychical structure of a child, which should not be “killed,” because every child has the right “to be young” (Gogala, 1930, p. 263). The mission of the school is to transfer cultural values to youth; however, the question is how to do it. Gogala’s answer was that a child “grows into the culture that means into something, which in fact lies outside him” (Gogala, 1930, p. 263). This growing into the culture should not be oppressive; culture must be presented to youth as a value, in a way that he or she could become fond of it (Gogala, 1930). The principle of originating in a child should be interpreted in terms of the child’s mentality, and never just normatively. Gogala then critically exposed Osterc as a representative of a particular pedagogical movement. Gogala pointed out that every new ideational movement was defined and propagated by people who had genuinely experienced values of the movement, and therefore, absolutely believed in the triumph of their ideas. Although the leading champions of the movement lived and the movement was still young, the movement itself was also, in the sense of ideas and values, strong and genuine. The problem usually occurred when the content of the movement was accepted by other people, who had not experienced its original values in a genuine and direct manner; when the movement began to spread, it usually lost its profundity and intensity (Gogala, 1930). Gogala was certain that the idea of “work school” (which was almost a synonym for all reform movements in his time) was good, but it demanded much more readiness and knowledge of a teacher than the existing school. That is why he was worried that average teachers, who were in the majority, could not satisfactorily fulfill its demands (Gogala, 1930). Despite Gogala’s positions, because of the biased postwar interpretative paradigm that prevailed above all Ozvald was the one, who skeptically observed and disregarded actions of Teachers’ Movement, but it is more characteristic for Gogala. It even seems that Ozvald was kind of inclined to this pedagogical movement and took part in its actions immediately during the arrangements of program and actions. (Protner, 2000, p. 46)

Shortly before the beginning of World War II, considering the graduation of the intensity of critics from the side of radical representatives of reform pedagogy, where the Marxist-oriented pedagogues prevailed, Ozvald, wrote,

Two or more conceptions of the world, which do not fit together, are not necessarily an obstacle for the productive pedagogical work, but in its essence they can even be a living fountain, where from a healthy current of pedagogical activity is supplied. Of course only then, if I do not see in a person with a different world view an enemy, who should be knocked down, but—a co-human, who thinks, judges and wants, differently as I do, however his thinking, judging or wanting is perhaps of more worth than mine. And to be adverse to someone objectively, is completely different as to—personally detest him! (Ozvald, 1939a, pp. 13-14)

Instead there should be an earlier opposition or antithesis, which was, with all its “combativeness,” more a denial of previous condition, vivid and to a creative work oriented synthesis (reconciliation, not a corrupt compromise) of that, what the “new school” in fact brings good and of that, what even in the “old” one was not worthless. (Ozvald, 1939a, p. 18)

Reform Pedagogy

The third philosophy in the period between the two world wars conceptualized reform pedagogy, which, in Slovenia and elsewhere in Europe, had more orientations and currents. However, two designations were primarily used and prevailed in Slovenia, namely “work school” and “paedology” (mladinoslavje). In fact, reform pedagogy in Slovenia was conceptualized and theoretically founded through the term of
the work school. The essential characteristic of reform pedagogy could be that the center of attention is a child/pupil with all his needs and demands. Everything else should be ordered around him. For the major part of orientations and movements of reform pedagogy, Rousseau’s concept of a child and his education (Rousseau, 1979), as well as E. Key’s interpretation (Key, 1909), were decisive.

In the course of time, within the reform, pedagogy in Slovenia theoretically strengthened the movement, which could be labeled social-critical movement. Its representatives and followers were predominantly left-oriented educationalists and teachers, who were members of two professional associations: the Pedagogical Central (Pedagoška centrala) in Maribor and the Teachers’ Movement (Učiteljski pokret) in Ljubljana. Even this educational movement was not homogeneous, but gradually prevailing pedagogues, who were convinced that genuine school reform would only be possible after (revolutionary) changes had occurred in social conditions and the social order; these pedagogues essentially opposed all other orientations outside reform pedagogy (Strmčnik, 1979). Its representatives and followers took up important positions and functions in the educational system in Slovenia after World War II.

The postwar definition of reform pedagogy or paedology (mladinoslovje), which became part of the aforementioned interpretative paradigm, was

Paedology (mladinoslovje) is a sign of the crisis of the bourgeois pedagogy in the imperialistic period, which in its own field reflected the crisis of the entire social system. What was and still is the essence of the crisis of the bourgeois pedagogy, which reflected in paedology? . . . Escape into the nature of a child was not originated in the love toward the child, but in the enmity toward social development; with this escape it did not decline its help to bourgeois reaction, but it even, in a devious way, on [a] more hidden mode, graduated it. (Schmidt, 1947, p. 251)

The most important theorist and founder of the social-critical movement was Franjo Žgeč, who was the first in Slovenia to connect the ideas of reform pedagogy and Marxist ideology. He was also the first to want to empirically assess the influences of the milieu for the development of children and to elaborate proper solutions. Some influential papers were written on the basis of his research, which encouraged Žgeč such that he attempted to conduct another study of the situation of Slovenian children with Ozvald in 1936/1937. Unfortunately, this research was not finished, because the objectives were too pretentious for that period from the methodological and organizational perspective (Bergant, 1961).

Žgeč also attempted to implement the so-called “production school” based on the model of Blosnky, one of the most important Soviet pedagogues. In connection with this, Žgeč underestimated the theoretical knowledge and systematic teaching of children, because for him knowledge should only be an instrument for forming the abilities and powers of a pupil, and not the goal of instruction (Bergant, 1961).

Despite the radical ideas of some movements or individual representatives of the reform pedagogy, we could say that the opinion of the majority defended the position that

Not everything is good, what theory claims as “new” and also not everything old is bad; it is not everything golden, what comes from abroad, as well everything domestic is not a rusty iron. But we need proofs, results and numbers, which we cannot get only on the basis of theoretical-scientific considerations, approvals or rejections, but only with systematic work on the scientific basis and with the fieldwork. (Ledinek, 1936, p. 20)

In the same manner, the opinion of a considerable number of followers, or estimated representatives, of reform pedagogy and especially of the social-critical movement in that period was generally not particularly negative toward cultural pedagogy and its representatives: “Solid outlines and concepts of contemporary school and educational movement is building since 1918 and even since prewar period university professor Dr. K. Ozvald” (Ledinek, 1936, p. 23).

Even inside reform pedagogy in Slovenia, certain defects of work school were problematized; it was established that individuals soon appeared who began to practice work school, but from different viewpoints, that is, one of them saw the essence of work school in manual work, the second one in nicely written and illustrated diary, the third one in too abundant palaver of children, in grabbing the contents and shallowness of work, and copying the work according to others’ diaries and in the hunt of work plans and their copying. (Ledinek, 1936, p. 23)

However, only a minority correctly understood that, above all, school reform meant a reform of “education,” that is, a change in the relationship between the pupil and the teacher (class, contents). Education was until then “a stepchild of formal-didactical work and material overload” (Ledinek, 1936, p. 23).

Conclusion

The beginning, and first decades, of the 20th century were characterized by three principal pedagogical concepts or movements in Slovenia: Herbartianism, geisteswissenschaftliche pedagogy, and reform pedagogy (known as progressive pedagogy in the United States). All these concepts argued for the inseparable interlacing of education with instruction; however, they differed in their understanding of the factors of education during instruction and their effects. Thus, Herbartianism defined the educability of the pupil on the formal structure of instruction and geisteswissenschaftliche pedagogy on the contents of the instruction, while reform pedagogy rejected any direct educational effect. In almost all other viewpoints, the three educational movements differed, which caused (vigorous) arguments and polemics between
their representatives (e.g., theory vs. praxis; “old” school vs. “new” school).

In this period, Herbartianism was conceptually the weakest orientation, as it was sensed that its time was over. The strongest in the way of scientific and theoretic argumentation was geisteswissenschaftliche or cultural pedagogy, which was sometimes also called “academic” pedagogy, as most of its prominent representatives were university professors (Dr. K. Ozvald and Dr. S. Gogala). Reform pedagogy, with its sociocritical movement, did not have any significant theorist, with the exception of Dr. Franjo Žgeč, and lacked theoretical conceptualization.

In the process of defining and grounding single pedagogical orientations and currents, disagreements and polemics arose. The most intense, but also the most productive polemics and conflicts, existed between cultural pedagogy and some movements (or just isolated representatives) of reform pedagogy. In Slovenia, the ideas of reform pedagogy above all introduced, represented, and defended left-oriented pedagogues and teachers, who were convinced that school reform would be possible only after (revolutionary) changes in social conditions; that is why these polemics sometimes unfortunately also developed an ideological tone and were subjected to political interpretations.

Regrettably, World War II ended, and broke, any “creative” and productive development of pedagogical theory and praxis, and the new postwar (Marxist) pedagogical concept in Slovenia was for a long time, in fact, highly averse to the majority of the prewar pedagogical orientations and currents.

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