

Theoretical basis for curriculum development in Polish pedagogy between 1918 and 1939

Teoretyczne podstawy tworzenia programów nauczania w polskiej pedagogice w latach 1918–1939

Słowa kluczowe: program nauczania, pedagogika, edukacja, wychowanie, szkoła

Streszczenie: W artykule poruszono problematykę dotyczącą teorii konstruowania programów nauczania w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej. Były one inspirowane osiągnięciami i rozwojem dyscyplin naukowych, zajmujących się wychowaniem i kształceniem dzieci i młodzieży. Odzwierciedlały w swych fundamentalnych założeniach dorobek nowych nurtów pedagogicznych oraz teorii i koncepcji psychologicznych rozwijających się w tym czasie na świecie. Czerpiąc z ich osiągnięć niektórzy polscy pedagodzy podjęli w swojej refleksji naukowej zagadnienie programów nauczania, tworząc teoretyczne podstawy ich budowy dla wszystkich typów szkół, przyczyniając się przez to do organizowania rzeczywistości edukacyjnej po odzyskaniu niepodległości przez Polskę.

Key words: curriculum, pedagogy, education, upbringing, school

Abstract: The paper deals with issues concerning the theory of curriculum construction in the Second Republic of Poland. The curricula were inspired by the achievements and development of academic disciplines dealing with the upbringing and education of children and young people. In their fundamental assumptions they reflected the achievements of the new pedagogical trends, psychological theories and concepts developing in the world at that time. Drawing on their achievements, some Polish teachers took up the issue of curricula in their academic reflection, creating a theoretical basis for their construction for all types of schools, thus contributing to the organisation of the educational reality after Poland regained its independence.

Introduction

In *Dictionary of the Polish Language (Słownik języka polskiego, Karłowicz, Kryński, Niedźwiedzki, 1908)*, edited in the interwar period, the term *programme (curriculum)* was dealt with as a multifaceted one. It was indicated, among other things, that it denotes a certain planned order of the course of an activity or event. There was also a note referring to the sphere of education, presented in a concise manner as a timetable or schedule related to school curriculum, syllabus or the subject of lectures. Presenting it in such a form may only suggest that it is about an orderly arrangement of the content that should be taught. However, it does not allow for stating arbitrarily what curriculum actually was in restored Poland. More light

on this subject can only be provided by reading the works of outstanding Polish educators of that time.

This paper will analyse the concept of building theoretical foundations for curricula in the interwar period in Poland. Based on reference texts by some of the few educators of that period dealing with this matter, an attempt will be made to throw some light on their academic achievements in this area and to show the essential elements constituting the curricula in the theoretical aspect.

Theoretical assumptions of curriculum construction as viewed by Aniela Szycówna

One of the leading figures in Polish pedagogy at the turn of the 20th century was Aniela Szycówna, who engaged in academic research on issues relating to curricula. In her understanding, curriculum was a set of appropriately selected components that included the choice of knowledge (fields of study), i.e. determination of the list of subjects to be taught at school; determination of the scope of knowledge that should be provided within each individual subject; the planning of the order in which they should be presented; the development of the distribution of the academic material over the teaching periods and a detailed listing of teaching contents in the time intervals adopted (Szycówna, 1912). Therefore, according to this view, curriculum, which was referred to as 'teaching programme' or 'school programme', was understood as a list of subjects taught at school, containing specific teaching contents and given in an ordered manner.

A. Szycówna established some general principles according to which curricula should be created. First and foremost, she paid attention to the content of teaching understood as a set of messages that is to be delivered to the pupil. She noticed that those contents were usually arranged taking into account one of the two principles of their selection, i.e. utilitarianism and formalism. The shortcomings of the former one consisted in favouring the role of learning by doing and thus acquiring practical skills, in emphasising the pragmatic dimension of learning, i.e. providing the pupil with things that can be useful in life. On the other hand, the adoption of formalism as the only criterion for selecting the content of teaching, could, in her opinion, only develop into mind training activities in isolation from the real needs of life. Such one-sidedness in the choice of content (choice of only one option) could lead to disregard for knowledge and its educating values, and consequently to impoverishment of the effects of education, making the pupil deprived of a large portion of essential knowledge, facts, theories and views relevant to their personal culture and development, or to the diminution of the role of practical skills important in human life as an individual, a member of the society and a citizen of the state (Szycówna, 1912). According to A. Szycówna, it was only through an attempt at synthesising these two proposals that an optimal version of the curriculum could be prepared.

Following these two criteria for the selection of the teaching content, the subjects to be taught had to be selected and the scope of the material defined for them. At the same time, it was necessary to indicate the fundamental knowledge (basic elements of knowledge) and then to move from the general basics to specific issues (grading of difficulty) so that the pupil should have the most essential knowledge from in field, selected in such a way that they not only have the knowledge in a given subject but also the ability to use it. With these assumptions, it was necessary to develop a plan for the successive introduction of the new curriculum content including new subjects as some of them must come before others, so that the student could understand more complex content at subsequent stages of education based on the knowledge acquired in the younger classes (Szcówna, 1912). This implied arranging the curriculum a logical and psychological order, i.e. introducing the teaching content (in specified parts) at subsequent stages of education in an orderly and consistent manner, respecting pupils' needs and the characteristics of their minds (Szcówna, 1917).

In the understanding of A. Szcówna, an important determinant of the curriculum development was the pupil themselves. Her views in this respect were shaped by new trends in teaching related to the era of the new school and new education, which saw the need to take into account their needs, interests and development phases (Bereźnicki, 1984). She was interested in issues related to the psychological and physical development of children and the application of this knowledge by teachers to the issues of upbringing and teaching (Leżańska, 2017). She expressed this in the concept of arranging the school curriculum as she drew attention to the necessity of being guided by pupils' mental capabilities in the selection of the content of teaching. Taking this into account, it was necessary to construct the curriculum in such a way as to combine the relevant teaching content (school subjects) with pupils' various interests that are gradually revealed along with their psychophysical development. In addition, there was the need to take into account, at each stage of development, the abilities and capabilities of the mind to assimilate and understand particular contents and to bear in mind that assimilation of knowledge is a long-term process (Szcówna, 1912).

While developing the issue of the school curriculum, A. Szcówna emphasised that its construction also involved school hygiene. She meant that acquiring knowledge by a pupil is a significant mental and physical effort for them so it requires adequate time for classroom activities but also for rest. The idea was to arrange the curriculum in such a way as not to overburden pupils with too many classes or too many subjects at each level. The adoption of guidelines on the hygiene of mental work at school was bound to result in a revision of the teaching content and school subjects with the aim of reducing the scope of the knowledge imparted to what was considered important due to its academic or educational value, i.e. to the most important and basic issues (Szcówna, 1912).

The principle of concentration was understood to be an important factor influencing the choice of teaching content and the distribution of material into individual levels. The purpose was to arrange the information provided to the pupil in such a way that it form a uniform and harmonious whole in their mind, centred around certain main concepts. This could concern certain parts of the material within a single subject but it could also involve combining knowledge from related subjects in such a way that the areas of knowledge should complement each other. The curriculum had to be arranged in such a way that certain parts of the material would, as far as possible, overlap in order to make it easier for the pupil to create a synthesis from fragments of knowledge acquired from different school subjects (Szcówna, 1917).

A. Szcówna also saw the need to take social circumstances into account when creating a curriculum. In her opinion, the child's experiences from the family home, habits, customs, tradition, way of life and work were valuable. They should become, at least at the initial stage of teaching, a reference point in education. The idea was to apply in the school curriculum the didactic principle that was well-known to the child from the immediate environment and move towards the more and more distant regions at subsequent levels of education. The social dimension of the curriculum was meant to manifest itself through the gradual familiarisation of the pupil with the cultural heritage of the homeland, the past of the nation and current knowledge about the country of origin, and the rights and duties, in order to prepare conscious and educated citizens of the Polish state, building its power and prosperity (Szcówna, 1917). The curriculum was therefore intended to arouse patriotic feelings and build pupils' identity as a member of the regional and national community.

Lucjan Zarzecki on constructing the foundations of the curricula

Another author who dealt with the issue of curriculum development in the period concerned was Lucjan Zarzecki. The reading of his publications may lead to the conclusion that curriculum is a certain set of subjects linked together in a logical and psychological order, constituting an organic whole, transmitting knowledge in a clear and thorough way and influencing the entire mental development of a pupil and their character (Zarzecki, 1920).

Like A. Szcówna, he enumerates several constitutive elements that should characterise a well-designed curriculum. He took some of them into careful consideration. In the first place, he drew attention to the need for unequal treatment of the subjects included in the school curriculum. In his opinion, old syllabuses, arranged without proper gradation of subjects, led to overloading the pupil with teaching material. Therefore, he recommended that when creating the curriculum, certain segregation should be made and subjects should be classified into basic, main and other to create a certain hierarchy of their importance. In addition, the approach to them should depend on the type (lower, middle) and the type of

school (profile) with emphasis on the group of subjects defining its specificity. The type of school should also determine the elimination of certain subjects in favour of the core ones, which principle should be clearly indicated in the school curricula (Zarzecki, 1920). Such measures were supposed to prevent the duplication in the new curricula of the error referred to as encyclopaedism. This theory of selecting the content of education primarily favoured the content of knowledge and the gathering thereof as much as possible from various fields of science and memorising it. In this way, attempts were made to convey as much knowledge as possible to the pupil, and this in a theoretical approach resembling an encyclopaedia, with the assumption that an educated person is one who remembers a lot, without too much regard for whether it would be useful for them in pursuit of their personal purposes, either cognitive or practical (Zarzecki, 1920).

L. Zarzecki held the opinion that among all the subjects included in the curriculum, learning the mother tongue should be particularly valued. After the period of the Partitions and the fight to destroy the Polish national identity, this appeal was explicable to the general public. His teaching was intended to help the pupil learn about the treasures of Polish culture as well as the past and the literary tradition as the foundations of national identity. He treated those factors as extremely valuable national treasures that were meant to become the core and centre of pupils' education. The whole process of education was intended to focus on all that was Polish. All the subjects included in the school curriculum were to have such inclinations (Zarzecki, 1920).

He attached great importance to the arrangement of the curriculum. He was in favour of applying two principles referred to as concentric and genetic. He understood the former one in such a way that the selection of the teaching content within the individual subjects should be presented as recurrent cycles of material with intervals of several years so that the pupil first learn the basics at the initial stage of education and then expand and consolidate their knowledge of known facts at the next stages. It was therefore a matter of first giving some simple facts, and then moving on to more complex ones, referring back to the knowledge already acquired. The latter principle, in turn, implied such an arrangement of the teaching content within a particular subject that it would show the relations between these facts, adjusting the content to the pupil's developmental stages at the particular levels of school education. In his opinion, curricula should contain these two arrangements depending on the school subject. The authors of the curricula should be well acquainted with the specifics of the particular subject in order to choose the best possible variant in relation to the content presented in order to make it easier for the pupil to acquire knowledge (Zarzecki, 1920).

Philosophy of the basis for curriculum as perceived by Kazimierz Sośnicki

Among the outstanding educators of the interwar period who took up the issue of school curriculum was also Kazimierz Sośnicki. In his approach, school curriculum means teaching material that is properly selected and ordered for each subject according to previously adopted rules and spread over the entire period of the pupil's school education, specifying the time limit for its implementation and providing particulars on the manner of such implementation (Sośnicki, 1925, p. 64).

In his publication, he focused on the content of the subjects and introduced two principles of arranging learning material, i.e. a material and a formal one. The former one takes account of the content of knowledge, i.e. its subject matter, and concerns basic knowledge which is the starting point for teaching not based on other knowledge or derived therefrom, which requires mastering the basic knowledge and relying on it. Thus, this determined the order of introducing subjects into school practice following logical reasons. The latter one was related to the pupil's psychophysical development and made the application of the teaching material dependent on their developmental stages and was guided by their intellectual and emotional capabilities. In this case, therefore, psychological reasons were taken into account, i.e. subsequent stages of the pupil's development and their characteristics. Failure to take these principles into account in the preparation of the school curriculum may have resulted in a situation where learning was too easy for a pupil (poorly exercising the mind) or too difficult (exceeding the capacity of the mind) (Sośnicki, 1925).

The third principle in arranging the order of presentation of the teaching material concerned the scope of knowledge. It was about the type of content that each subject was to provide to the pupil. In general, the purpose was to provide such a scope and type of content as to make sure that a pupil leaving school would have sufficient knowledge of social and cultural relations, would be prepared for coexistence in the society and would be prepared to contribute to improving the culture of their environment (Sośnicki, 1925).

He called for such a manner of selecting the teaching material that it should take into account not only the quantity and scope of knowledge but also its quality. The proof of its appropriate level was the degree of assimilation, i.e. the pupil's understanding of the content, its memorisation, formulation and application. Another important aspect was the pupil should not only master the contents of the teaching but also perceive the relations between them, linking them with the knowledge acquired from all subjects included in the school curriculum (Sośnicki, 1925).

Speaking of the arrangement and order of the teaching content, defined as the course of study, he pointed to possible solutions in this respect. He enumerated several common types of such a course, namely progressive, cyclic, analytical

and synthetic as well as inductive and deductive. The progressive course of study presented the teaching material in such a way that it gave certain parts (sections) one by one until the planned scope of knowledge was completely exhausted. This meant that after the pupil was acquainted with a certain part of the material from a particular subject, provided at one time, they did not return to it anymore but a new section of the material was presented in a complete form. The academic material included in the curriculum could also be presented cyclically. It was arranged so that a limited amount of information was provided in the first period of learning with topics limited to the simplest and most relevant to the pupil but constituting a specific whole. As this elementary content are assimilated and mastered by the pupil, they return to the same in the next period of education, and now it is expanded and supplemented. In this way, separate cycles are created beginning with a lower cycle that provides basic information (concrete thinking) to a higher cycle complementing it, leading to a systematic approach to the whole of the particular subject (abstract thinking). Other ways of arranging the teaching material in a school curriculum could be the analytical and synthetic courses. The former one is characterised by the fact that first the content of a certain subject is given in overall terms and then the individual components of the subject are discussed with the aim of better understanding. K. Sośnicki referred to the reverse order, i.e. progressing from information concerning particular parts of the subject to those relating to it as a whole, as the synthetic course. He proposed that the authors of the curricula should use them in equal measure according to the teaching content presented, the age of the students and their capabilities (Sośnicki, 1925). He further distinguished the inductive and deductive courses. The inductive course consisted in providing detailed information first and then general while the deductive course was the other way round. The idea was to train the pupil's mind in inductive and deductive reasoning. The first one led to the knowledge of some general principle or rule based on individual facts and one-off experiences so it taught to derive generalisations on this basis and move from individual cases to general statements. The second one went in the direction of deriving specific knowledge from general rules and principles (Sośnicki, 1925).

The principle of concentration also had to be taken into account when creating a curriculum. Its theoretical assumptions in this respect were in many points consistent with the views of A. Szygówna. He understood this didactic principle as the organising and combining of the contents from different school subjects (external concentration) or as fusing them within the same subject so that the content given in subsequent theme modules, distant in time during the school year would nevertheless constitute a certain monolith (internal concentration). The third type of concentration in the arrangement of a curriculum could be to separate key issues (concepts), in other words teaching centres, around which other information from school subjects should be grouped, which would allow to discuss some selected issue from different perspectives characteristic for the individual fields

of academic knowledge. The idea that information given during different lessons should be focused on a common issue that would be explained taking into account the specifics of the particular subject (Sośnicki, 1925).

In the 1930s, K. Sośnicki also introduced three more principles of building a curriculum, i.e. the principle of practicality of learning, the psychological principle and the cultural principle. The first one emphasises the utilitarian dimension of knowledge and requires that the content of learning should consist of that which has practical application and helps one in one's functioning. This principle could also be read in a different way, other than just preparing a pupil for life in mature age. The aim was also that the contents of the curriculum should establish a close link between schooling and the pupil's current life and the world around them. The curriculum was to fulfil this by introducing elements taken from the pupil's environment so that the two zones of their life, at school and outside of it, would be consistent with each other, so that they would not introduce the impression of being separated and different (Sośnicki, 1937).

The next principle required that the curriculum be adapted to the developmental mental and physical powers of the student. This is because not all components of the surrounding reality are understandable to them at every stage of their development. In this arrangement, they must be selected in the school curriculum in such a way that they be appropriate for the corresponding phase of development as well as individual psychophysical conditions. The psychological principle of the curriculum construction demands that it be based on the pupil's spontaneous interests and needs, which are the expression of a certain developmental stage. This means that the teaching material must be adapted to their level of development but does not exclude broader (more difficult) and vital content (Sośnicki, 1937).

The last of the principles that were intended to shape the school curriculum concerned culture. The curriculum was to be arranged in such a way that it would prepare for the mastering of the basic and common cultural knowledge, which would be sufficient for the understanding and mutual coexistence of the members of society, sharing ideas and aspirations collectively. It had to take into account the natural and geographical conditions in which culture is shaped, which in practice meant emphasising its national character. The teaching material was to be selected in such a way as to promote Polishness in a way that would correspond to the specifics of the particular school subject and take into account the stages of teaching, starting from the student's immediate surroundings and moving in ever wider circles, showing the local culture, the region, the country, and finally the culture of other countries and humanity (Sośnicki, 1937).

Theoretical doctrine of curricula in the thought of Bogdan Nawroczyński

The most complete study on the theoretical principles of building a curriculum was given by Bogdan Nawroczyński, an outstanding pedagogue of that period. In his

approach, curriculum is a detailed arrangement of cultural treasures, appropriately selected and systematised, and serving the purpose of education (Nawroczyński, 1930b). However, it should not be limited to the educational dimension by conveying only the knowledge about the produced cultural goods (teaching material) but should also have an educational aspect by shaping the personality of the student to become an active and creative participant of this culture in the society in which they will have to function. The task of the school curriculum is to identify those cultural goods that can have the greatest influence on their intellectual and spiritual development (Nawroczyński, 1937–1939). According to B. Nawroczyński, this is in fact a testimony to the pedagogical value of the curriculum, which should strive at uniting two realities, i.e. the inner spiritual life of the developing individual and the world of spiritual culture of society (Nowak, 2018). Education at school should consist in the pupil's meeting with values, and consequently, in getting to know them through creative reasoning, and in experiencing the values that constitute culture, which should be an essential factor in the formation of their personality and formation of the full spiritual structure of man (Radek, 2003).

In this context, the issue of the choice of teaching material for the school curriculum becomes important. It is a rather difficult task because the authors of the curriculum are charged with the responsibility of reconciling the tremendous wealth of national and human culture on the one hand with the pupil's limited learning capacity on the other hand. They must, however, make a careful selection in order to convey the most important content but with a profound insight, following the principle of *non multa sed multum*. B. Nawroczyński claimed that when choosing teaching material one should take into account social realism, i.e. the current social reality, reflecting its condition and needs. The school curriculum was intended to influence the future of society by promoting among students important ideas, models and values that form a constant point of reference (educational doctrine), despite the changes taking place in it, so as to transform society, striving for its ever better development, raising the level of culture and passing it on to new generations. For these reasons, he called for each curriculum creator to take these two factors into consideration (Nawroczyński, 1937–1939).

The choice of the teaching content itself did not conclude the matter with regard to creating the school curriculum. It still had to be arranged properly. On the one hand, the purpose was to pull together all the details comprised in the curriculum into a coherent whole with the most compact structure possible (curriculum synthesis); on the other hand, the purpose was also to adapt it to the characteristics and needs of the student in the best possible way (curriculum individualisation). In the former case, the authors of the curriculum had to realise that a school curriculum consists of numerous subjects that convey knowledge from various fields of knowledge and culture, and at the same time carry a variety of religious, moral, aesthetic, social, economic and technical goods that are additionally diverse with regard to the outlook on of human nature, society and the world. The synthesis of all these

elements was intended to contribute to pursuing school education of an integral nature (Nawroczyński, 1937–1939; Nawroczyński, 1930a).

B. Nawroczyński addressed the issue of synthesis in a multi-faceted manner, referring to the lower and secondary education level. He was of the opinion that the first four years of primary school education should be marked by a departure from the scheme of traditional school subjects. Based on the achievements of Western European pedagogy, he claimed that during this period the content of teaching in the traditional way (according to subjects) is foreign and incomprehensible to children. A solution in this respect could have been to arrange the curriculum around the pupils' centres of interest, i.e. around subjects corresponding to their needs and interests. These topics were to be exposed from different points of view, providing knowledge from several fields at the same time, during the same classes rather than in separate lessons, i.e. combining them into one theme module (Nawroczyński, 1937–1939).

He was of the opinion that after the stage of teaching covering the first four years of primary school; it was time to gradually introduce in the school curriculum teaching material arranged according to the various subjects. At that time, the pupil was already capable of abstract thinking, which meant they were able to assimilate academic concepts (Nawroczyński, 1937–1939). The synthesis of knowledge in this period, especially in secondary school, should be based on correlation, i.e., the binding of individual subjects, using the relations between them. With this in mind, the authors of curricula should take account of this fact by appropriately selecting and arranging the teaching material so that it can be at least integrated to some extent, creating a certain synthesis on the basis of the information obtained by the student during classes in various subjects (Nawroczyński, 1918). According to B. Nawroczyński, in addition to the correlation, there was also the need for a guiding idea in the curriculum that would provide a real synthesis of the teaching material. The guiding idea of the curriculum could have determined the content of all subjects, even those which were not related, giving them a common framework, setting them a single direction of education and upbringing. The search for a superior idea was to reflect the spirit of a particular epoch and society (Nawroczyński, 1937–1939).

With regard to constructing the curriculum, he also saw the need to take into account two demands, namely that the curriculum should be adapted to the age of the pupil and should take into account individual differences among peers (Nawroczyński, 1937–1939). Guided by the former one, the authors of the curricula had to remember to choose teaching content in the school curriculum in different ways depending on whether it concerned combined teaching or teaching by subject. Hence, it was necessary to divide the curriculum for general education into at least two consecutive educational levels. The lower level, called propedeutical, was intended for the first four years of teaching, while the higher level, called systematic, was intended for students in subsequent classes. Building the curriculum with these levels was aimed at adapting it as best as possible to

the characteristics, interests, activities and needs of the pupil. This means that psychological considerations were to be the point of reference here as the teaching material had to be adapted to the pupil's developmental stages (Nawroczyński, 1937–1939). In the case of the latter proposal, individual differences between students were to be taken into account, which meant that different classes or different school profiles, and consequently different curricula, had to be created for them according to their interests, capabilities and degree of intelligence. This could be done for both primary and secondary schools. Since there are fewer qualitative individual differences at the lower level of education, class differentiation could mainly take place according to the level of intelligence, which in practice meant creating classes for children with a level of intelligence that deviated from the commonly accepted standard. Usually, however, it was not separate classes that were created but rather special schools for children with lower levels of intelligence. And for all the remaining students who were poorly, moderately or exceptionally talented, the curriculum was to be the same due to the nature of the common school, which was to be uniform and unified, giving children of all social strata common upbringing and education (Nawroczyński, 1937–1939).

As far as secondary school is concerned, at this stage of education the school curriculum was meant to take into account pupils' capabilities when selecting the content of teaching, providing them with opportunities to develop and expand their knowledge in those areas that interested them. Therefore, it was advisable to organise schools or classes according to the passions of young people, creating various teaching profiles. The diversity could mean opening of a department (profile) at a school, for example in the humanities or mathematics and natural sciences and then adding further courses with the age of the pupil (Nawroczyński, 1937–1939).

The individualisation of the teaching content was to take on another dimension in the secondary school curriculum. It was to be constructed in such a way as to give the student a choice between several subjects and to allocate a few extra hours a week for personal study. In this way, by choosing a specific faculty at the secondary school, they could choose other subjects, in addition to those characteristic of the school type, related to their interests. Additionally, they could get a few extra hours to develop their passions related to the chosen subject (Nawroczyński, 1937–1939).

According to B. Nawroczyński, when creating the school curriculum, the role of the teacher in its implementation also had to be taken into account. The curriculum was supposed to activate the teacher to engage creatively in the work of making the curriculum a reality in the school practice. The curriculum was to be flexible to provide the teacher with considerable freedom in the choice of the content and its presentation. In this way, common curriculum content for the whole country could be presented taking into account local conditions. Thus, the teacher was supposed to draw the base material from the general curriculum but they could explain it at their own discretion, reaching out to the pupil's environment, looking

for examples and references in the immediate environment, characteristic for the particular region of the country, i.e. close to the pupil (Nawroczyński, 1937–1939).

Conclusion

In summary, it should be stated that the concepts of creating school curricula adopted by Polish educators reflected the then current world trends in pedagogy aiming at rejecting the assumptions of traditional teaching and accepting the demands of modern education. In the principles constructed for creating school curricula, they accepted the premises ensuing from the rapidly developing trends of new education, from an in-depth study of child development, mainly developmental psychology and experimental pedagogy. They wanted to focus school curricula on the organisation and development of pupils' activity and creativity, acquiring deeper and longer lasting knowledge, better preparation for adult life and their socialisation. Instead of passive reception of as much knowledge as possible, they introduced independent acquisition of knowledge through individual work, personal search, own thinking and experience. They included in the curriculum assumptions the criterion of psychological adjustment of teaching methods and contents to the level of the particular class and mental development of the students. What they had in mind was adjusting the content of education to the immediate environment of the child's life and expanding the area along with the child's development and education to include the region, the country and the world. In the selection of the teaching material, they pointed to the need to group subjects, to abandon all or some of the school subjects (depending on the stage of education) in favour of focusing the content on selected thematic issues resulting from students' experiences, needs and interests. They advocated maintaining the flexible character of the curriculum so that the teacher could be its co-creator, drawing on the lives of students and the life of the society in which they function and for which they acquire knowledge and skills to use them creatively for their personal benefit and that of the state.

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