

Introduction

Becoming Independent: Renewal of Education in Estonia with Parallels in Latvia and Lithuania

Ene-Silvia Sarv

Abstract. The article describes the early period (1987–1997) of education renewal in Estonia and other Baltic countries by analysing the timeline of emancipation and influences of participative democracy. The subject of study covers the main activities and ideas, conceptions of (re)creation of a national school, and education in Estonia with some parallels and interactions with Lithuania and Latvia. The problem addressed in the study is the character of educational changes and the nature of the contradictions in these changes. The research method is reflective qualitative documentary research, including publications, oral and written memories, and context and comparative analysis. Conclusions indicate that general use of terms quickly emerged in a paradigm of changing metaphors and keywords: democratisation of education, school autonomy, national education (upbringing), humanisation, pluralism, etc. Wide grassroots participation was rejected by the parallel regime of knowledge/power that had strong influence during this time. Cooperation among Baltic countries influenced the conceptual aspects of national education/school and supported developments during the initial period of renewal and later.

Keywords: history of education, renewal of education, Baltic states, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, paradigm change

Introduction

In 2019, the three Baltic states – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – celebrated the 30th anniversary of the *Baltic Way* (or Baltic Chain). On 23 August 23 1989, 1.5 million people joined hands in a 675-km-long uninterrupted human chain from Tallinn through Riga to Vilnius. They chanted: “Freedom! Freedom! Freedom.” The pathos, idealism and enthusiasm that culminated in this precisely organized event were broadly inherent to the renewal of education that began in 1987. Metaphorically we can ask: “Was it a way or a chain?”

For almost 50 years, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia were subjected to Soviet authoritarian occupation ideological, political, and economic policies within the Soviet Union along with its centralized system of education. Yet, Estonia found a way, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, to gradually introduce more independent education policies. Some textbooks were written in Estonian by Estonian authors, and school lasted 11 years compared with 10 years in most Soviet republics. Many schools had a specific specialisation or specialised classes from primary grades on (such as English, German, French, the arts)

or in grades 9–11 (such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, history, literature, theatre). Despite outward compliance with Soviet requirements, many Estonian teachers and teacher trainers, especially those who received their comprehensive education and teacher training in the Estonian Republic (1920–1940), retained a vision of the Estonian national school from the “golden years” of independence. The situation was similar in Latvia and Lithuania.¹

The USSR experienced a new awakening in the late 1980s under Gorbachev’s *glasnost* and *perestroika*.² But the issues, demands, and popular movements from 1987–1991 in the Baltic republics differed significantly from processes in the other Soviet republics. Once the path to liberalisation emerged, the Baltic republics attempted to break free from Soviet control in a drive for independence in economy³ and education and for political sovereignty. In 1988, the Popular Fronts of Estonia (13 April) and of Latvia (21 June) and the Lithuanian Renewal Movement *Sajūdis* (3 June) were founded. The Baltic Way and the “Singing Revolution” led to the re-establishment of independence in all three Baltic countries after the collapse of the USSR in 1991.

A decade later, an OECD team studied educational politics in all three countries and noted that education has historically been a central priority for each of the Baltic states, especially since regaining independence. Education was critical for transition from a half-century of occupation and the pervasive impact of Soviet policy, ideology, and command economy. As relatively small countries with limited natural resources, the Baltic states recognized that human capital was their most important asset for competition in the global economy. All three Baltic states understood that progressive education and training policies were essential pre-requisites to accession to the European Union.⁴ OECD reports⁵ and McGuinness both noted that the differences and similarities in post-socialist country transition processes give copious material for analysis and interpretation.

¹ See I. Kestere, A. Krūze (eds.), *History of Pedagogy and Educational Sciences in the Baltic Countries from 1940 to 1990: an Overview*, Riga, RaKa, 2013.

² Democratisation of Soviet Union (announced by Gorbachev in January 1987) as *perestroika* (re-structuring, innovation, renewal) included transparency/openness as *glasnost*, which enabled the greater freedom (including economy, public sphere) and public exchange of different opinions than had not been possible before Gorbachev.

³ In September 1988, Self-management Estonia (IME) was announced to make Estonia economically independent, self-managed (adopt a market economy, establish Estonia’s own currency and tax system, etc.).

⁴ A. McGuinness, ‘Overview of Education Policy Reviews of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania,’ in *Colloquium ‘Education reforms in Baltic states 1987–2000: critical evaluation and future strategies’*, Tallinn, 2002. Available: http://www.haridusfoorum.ee/index.php?page=overview_of_education_policy_reviews_of_estonia_latvia_and_lithuania#1 (accessed 13 February 2012); OECD, *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Estonia*, Paris, OECD, 2001.

⁵ OECD, *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Estonia*, Paris, OECD, 2001; OECD, *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Lithuania*, Paris, OECD, 2001; OECD, ‘Reviews of National Policies for Education: Latvia,’ 2001. Available: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264192478-en> (accessed 14 July 2017).

Despite OECD overviews and research, the years 1987–1991/2 and 1996/7–2004 were not recorded with sufficient precision or studied and interpreted in depth. This period was rich in events and developments that continue to have a significant impact today through education curricula, school culture, educational organisations, teacher education, educational research and general value systems, not to mention the life and destiny of the educational intelligentsia.

This study provides a brief overview of the transition period in education in the Baltic states, especially the early years after regaining political independence. The case study will focus on Estonia where I participated in educational reorganisation processes and preserved documents and memories that could serve as historical sources. My narrative is coloured by my experience, but subjectivity is an unavoidable part of historical study.⁶ Lithuanian and Latvian approaches were analysed based on published materials⁷ and discussions with colleagues of the then Baltic Board of Education (1988–1990) and actors in educational renewal.

A more detailed historical overview will give better understanding of the other articles in this collection and perception of the context of change and achievements.

Background: *perestroika*, national independence, and national education

In Estonia, the transition period began with the mass movement against phosphorites mining⁸ in the spring of 1987. In Latvia, people protested

⁶ E. Tucke, 'The Subject of History: Historical Subjectivity and Historical Science,' *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, no. 7, 2013, pp. 205–229.

⁷ R. Bruzgelevičienė, *Lietuvos švietimo kūrimas 1988–1997* [Creation of education in Lithuania 1988–1997], Vilnius, Sapnų Sala, 2008; O. Zīds, 'Vienoti kopīgam mērķim un sasniegumiem' [United for common purpose and achievements], in A. Krūze, Ē. Lanka, J. Aizpurs (eds.), *Latvijas Universitātes Pedagoģijas, psiholoģijas un mākslas fakultāte zinātnei un izglītībai. PPMF 30* [University of Latvia, Faculty of Education, Psychology and Art for science and education. FEPA 30], Rīga, LU Akadēmiskais apgāds, 2013, pp. 32–41; M. Lukšiene, 'Education and culture,' in M. Lukšienė, R. Bruzgelevičienė, V. Vaicekauskienė (eds.), *Educating for Freedom*, Vilnius, Alma Littera, 2014; A. Šmite, *Pedagoģisko darbinieku tālākizglītība Latvijā (1944–1990)* [Latvian Teachers In-Service Institute's Educational Innovation (1944–1990)], Rīga, RaKa, 2015.

⁸ The large-scale phosphorite deposits planned by the central government of the USSR threatened irreversible damage of the natural environment and the destruction and pollution of the entire groundwater system of north eastern and central Estonia. The other, more covert issue was the fear that the new mines would need a workforce that would start a wave of migration, bringing tens of thousands of workers from other parts of the Soviet Union to Estonia. This would have greatly worsened the already fragile demographic balance. The Phosphorite War activated the Estonian masses, gave people faith in the power of collective action, destabilized the Soviet Government in Estonia. See H. Vogt, *Between Utopia and Disillusionment: a Narrative of the Political Transformation in Eastern Europe*, New York, Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2005, p. 333.

the proposed building of a subway in Riga at the end of the 1980s.⁹ The Congress of Teachers of Estonia on 26 March 1987 was the beginning of energetic liberation of school education from excessive authoritarianism and Moscow's centralised rule known as 'educational renewal' (*haridusuwendus*).¹⁰ Lithuania and Latvia experienced almost similar processes. As it often happens, educational events and processes are shadowed in the general public by brighter or more painful occurrences. So, it is important to study and understand education processes as complex and individual.

For the pre-story of gaining independence in Estonia and its educational renewal, several meaningful phenomena were essential:

- Strong national culture traditions, including regular mass national song and dance festivals with 20 000–35 000 performers and hundreds of thousands of viewers, including TV and radio-audience.¹¹ Lithuania and Latvia has the same tradition. Also, the Singing Revolution – a unique phenomenon (1987–1989) – was a natural outgrowth of this tradition.
- Existence of semi-legal nonpolitical associations such as the Association of Natural Scientists, Association of Physics Teachers, and the Association of Nature Conservationists in Estonia and the Environmental Protection Club in Latvia ("Greens" in the Soviet era). Some of these became the central force in national movements and later, the core of political parties.
- Existence of advanced, progressive educational institutions such as the Teacher In-service Training/Professional Development Institute (STPDI),¹² Public Institute of Teachers-Researchers (PIPR), groups of

⁹ Subway construction was planned in Riga, which raised concerns in Latvian society about the threat to the urban environment and about the arrival of Russian-speaking builders and their families from other USSR republics.

¹⁰ P. Kreitzberg, S. Priimägi, 'Educational Transition in Estonia, 1987–1996,' *Oxford Studies in Comparative Education*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1998, pp. 47-60; E.-S. Sarv, 'Political and Social Transformations – Analysis in the Estonian Context,' in H. Niemi (ed.), *Moving Horizon in Education. International Transformations and Challenges of Democracy*, Helsinki, Helsinki University Press, 1999, pp. 39-65.

¹¹ For more on Song and Dance festivals and the Singing Revolution see M. Hellrand, 'Estonian Song Celebration timeline.' Available: <https://estonianworld.com/culture/estonian-song-celebration-timeline/> (accessed 18 February 2020); G. Šmidchens, *The Power of Song: Nonviolent National Culture in the Baltic Singing Revolution*, University of Washington Press, 2014.

¹² In 21st century publications in English, some parallel forms of the name and abbreviation appear: RTITI/ETITI – Republican/Estonian Teachers In-Service/Professional/Further Training Institute (various authors); STPDI State Teacher Professional Development Institute. See M. Lees, 'Estonian Education System 1990–2016: Reforms and their Impact,' 2016. Available: http://4liberty.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Estonian-Education-System_1990-2016.pdf (accessed 21 February 2020).

progressive scientist and academicians in universities, and the Institute of Pedagogical Research (SIPR) became the engines of educational reform.¹³

Early books and articles on *perestroika* concentrate mainly on economic processes and view *glasnost* as a step towards economic reconstruction, its political pre-condition.¹⁴ Yet for the Baltic states, democratisation, cultural rebirth, and human dimensions were the most important.

In Estonia, the first years of *perestroika* resulted in a growth of national consciousness, followed by the split of the Estonian Communist Party into a Moscow-oriented faction and a national wing. The Estonian Popular Front grew out of the latter. The same happened in the other Baltic states. This was one of the pre-conditions for gaining independence in 1991. In Estonia in 1987, Minister of Education Elsa Gretchkina was strongly influenced by national-minded researchers, teacher educators, and school leaders and adopted the idea of Estonian national schools and education. In Lithuania, Meilė Lukšienė, education scientist and historian at the Lithuanian Institute for Pedagogical Science and Research, was a founding member of *Sąjūdis* in 1988 and a leader in reform and development of Lithuania's education programmes.

Changes in the Latvian education system were also noted in the second half of the 1980s. Minister of Education, *Dr. paed.* Aldonis Builis (1930–2001), was not exactly a fighter for Latvian independence, but he was well aware of school practices and highly respected among Latvian educators. He was a democratic leader and a diplomat. These were qualities that helped him survive under Soviet dictatorship.¹⁵ Although Builis belonged to the Soviet nomenclature, the pedagogical ideas expressed in his works in the 1980s and early 1990s were closely linked to problems in schools after the restoration of independence.¹⁶

What was essential was that the foundations of educational renewal did not come down “from the top” (Moscow or regional communist party centre), according to Soviet tradition. Emerging ideas and first steps were predominantly

¹³ In every institution there were people who initiated or actively participated in the renewal movement and those who resisted it. This divide did not appear between communists and others – quite the opposite. In some cases, 1990s publications by “precocious” ones try to blame renewal initiators and supporters as “unprofessional,” “incompetent,” “unscientific.” Archive documents and personal memos need to be studied further.

¹⁴ For example, M. I. Goldman, ‘Perestroika,’ in *Library of Economics and Liberty*, 2002. Available: <http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc1/Perestroika.html> (accessed 18 February 2010).

¹⁵ B. Kaļķe, ‘Pedagogs un ministrs Aldonis Builis (1930–2001) [Pedagogue and minister Aldonis Builis (1930– 2001)]; in A. Krūze (ed.), *Laikmets un personība* [Era and personality], vol. 10, Rīga, RaKa, 2008, pp. 268–290.

¹⁶ A. Builis, *Mūsdienu skola* [Modern school], Rīga, Zvaigzne, 1985; A. Builis, *Skolvadības pamati* [Basics of school management], Rīga, Latvijas Universitāte, 1991; *Salīdzinošā pedagogija* [Comparative pedagogy], Rīga, Latvijas Universitāte, 1992.

joint efforts, which embraced hundreds and thousands of those involved in the field of education.¹⁷

The decade of the fall of the Berlin Wall, collapse of the Soviet system and socialist regimes in Central Europe, and renewed independence and a clear turn towards the capitalist system in the Baltic states has been described as transitions in the economic and political spheres.¹⁸ The process of educational renewal was viewed in 1993 as paradigmatic and cultural change,¹⁹ in 1997 as a participation process,²⁰ curriculum development process,²¹ and social change in a post-modern condition,²² and as a political process by OECD experts in 2001.²³ Periodisation of educational renewal and explanations of each period were based on the above-mentioned texts and several master and three doctorate theses.²⁴ The main metaphors or key words of each period are stressed.

¹⁷ The middle-up-down/middle-down-up initiative and process by the theory of learning organisation and learning society. See P. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline. The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, New York, Doubleday, 1990; Y. Baiyin, K. E. Watkins, V. J. Marsick, 'The Construct of the Learning Organization: Dimensions, Measurement, and Validation,' *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2004, pp. 31-56; S. Valdivielso, P. Belanger (eds.), *Emergence of Learning Societies. Who Participates in Adult Learning?* Oxford, Pergamon, 1997.

¹⁸ M. Lauristin, P. Vihalemm, 'Recent Historical Developments in Estonia: Three Stages of Transition (1987– 1997),' in M. Lauristin, P. Vihalemm, K. E. Rosengren, L. Weibull (eds.), *Return to the Western World. Cultural and Political Perspectives on Estonian Post-Communist Transition*, Tartu, Tartu University Press, 1997, pp. 73-127; M. Lukšienė, 'Education and Culture,' in M. Lukšienė, R. Bruzgelevičienė, V. Vaicekauskienė (eds.), *Educating for Freedom*, Vilnius, Alma Littera, 2014, pp. 29-75.

¹⁹ P. Kreitzberg, *The Legitimation of Educational Aims: Paradigms and Metaphors*, Lund, Lund University, 1993.

²⁰ E.-S. Sarv, *Kümme aastat paradigmuuutust* [Ten years of paradigmatic change], Tallinn, Tallinna Pedagoogikaülikool, 1998.

²¹ V.-R. Ruus, E.-S. Sarv, 'Changes in Estonian Curricula (1987–1999) and Some Thought on the Future,' in B. T. Beck, A. Mays (eds.), *Challenge and Change in Education: the Experience of the Baltic States in the 1990s*, New York, Nova Science Publishers, 2000, pp. 141-152.

²² E.-S. Sarv, 'The "Condition of Postmodernism" and Changes in Estonian Education 1987–1997,' in A. Liimets, (ed.), *Integration und Integrativität als Probleme in der Erziehungswissenschaft*, Berlin, Wien, New York, Peter Lang, 2001, pp. 135-152; E.-S. Sarv, 'Political and Social Transformations – Analysis in the Estonian Context,' in H. Niemi (ed.), *Moving Horizons in Education. International Transformations and Challenges of Democracy*, Helsinki, Helsinki University Press, 1999, pp. 39-65.

²³ OECD, *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Estonia*, Paris, OECD, 2001. Reviews on Latvia and Lithuania show parallels in these processes in three countries.

²⁴ P. Kreitzberg, *The Legitimation of Educational Aims: Paradigms and Metaphors*, Lund, Lund University, 1993; V. Varik, 'Hariduspoliitika ja üldhariduskorraldus Eestis aastatel 1940–1991' [Policy of education and general education organisation in Estonia 1940–1991], PhD diss., University of Tallinn, 2006; M. Oja, 'Muutused üldhariduskooli ajalooõpetuses alates 1987. aastast – nõukogulikust tänapäevaseks' [Changes in history teaching in general education since 1987 – from Soviet to modern], PhD diss., University of Tallinn, 2016; Candidate and MA theses by E. Silla, E. Veenpere, E.-S. Sarv, J. Veimer, K. Trahv, L. Jõumees, M. Kadakas, et al. Periodisation of Latvian education reform is explained also in this collection in the article by Aija Abens 'The Challenges of Teaching History in a Democracy: the Case of Latvia.'

1987–1989. Renewal was based on enthusiasm and wide public participation. It resulted in relative independence from Soviet educational institutions. Self-determination in the field of curriculum and organisation of general education meant a large amount of school-level decisions and participation by thousands of people in various forms of educational renewal, despite occasional misunderstandings and contradictions. The renewal process started with the Teachers' Congress on 26 March 1987, followed by brainstorming sessions, organisational development workgroups, project contests for national curricula and educational programmes, and re-establishment of a steering group by the ESSR Ministry of Education. All processes were at the grassroots level. In 1988, more than 20 secondary schools (of 203) took on the challenge of introducing a new “curriculum of branches”²⁵ of variations and choices. Here we can speak of “spontaneous” or “self-democratisation” of a large part of the educational system.²⁶ In 1989, the Estonian Education Platform²⁷ was created and approved at the Congress of Educators. Key concepts – democratisation, humanisation, and setting a high value on education – were highlighted. Estonian representatives supported the innovative, democratic developments of education taking place in Russia and cooperated intensely with Lithuanian and Latvian educators.

A Teachers' Congress took place in 1987 in Latvia, which was the beginning of a change in pedagogical thinking that focused now on democratisation, decentralisation, differentiation of curriculum and other issues.²⁸

It is important to mention that in March 1987, the ESSR Ministry of General Education supported re-creation of national schools. Ministry leadership led the process at the highest level possible in Estonia and with the Soviet Central Committee of the Communist Party and Ministry of Education. Estonia was recognised as a “school-experiment” by the USSR Ministry of Education in the winter of 1987/1988.

Ants Eglon, former School Department Head at the Ministry of Education, admitted that education in the Estonia SSR “directly and specifically separated from the education policy of the Soviet Union in 1988/89 and went its own way.”²⁹

1989–1991. Attempts began to organize the education system, first on the government level, and to create conditions for a more-or-less stable

²⁵ See in this collection: V. Rõuk, E-S Sarv, ‘The Estonian National School Curricula – Becoming and Development.’

²⁶ E.-S. Sarv, ‘*Demokraatiast ja humanismist õpetajale: Eesti haridusuuendus – hariduse demokraatiseerumine ja humaniseerumine*’ [On democracy and humanism for teachers: Estonian educational renewal – democratisation and humanisation of education], Tallinn, Riiklik Eksami-ja Kvalifikatsioonikeskus, 1997.

²⁷ E. Karedam et al., *Main Principles for Reorganisation of the Education in Estonia*, Tallinn, Teacher In-Service Training Institute, 1989.

²⁸ A. Staris (ed.), *Pedagoģiskā doma Latvijā no 1940. gada līdz mūsu dienām. Antoloģija* [Pedagogical thought in Latvia from 1940 to the present day. Anthology], Rīga, Puse, 1998.

²⁹ ‘Files of Ants Eglon,’ 1992, Tallinn University Estonian Pedagogical Archives and Museum, K43010-3, p. 7.

educational system through necessary laws. Based on the principles developed during the previous period, foundations were laid for independent Estonia's laws and curriculum. Some private schools, including alternative and religious schools, emerged.

Changes in teacher pre-service training and professional development were mostly connected to 1) exclusion of ideologically-biased subjects, such as the history of Communist Party and including a 'new view of history', 2) rediscovering and acknowledging foreign and Estonian Republic's (1920–1940) educational science and practice (Johannes Käis, Hilda Taba, Peeter Põld, et al.), and 3) introducing new methods (active learning, andragogy). Learning and teaching foreign languages was developing quickly as exile Estonian teachers organized language lessons for local teachers.

Exile Latvians also played an important role in the development of Latvian education. The First World Congress of Latvian Scientists in Riga (1991) was attended by about 1000 Latvian scholars from Latvia and abroad. A section on Pedagogy and Psychology was included. The first World Conference of Latvian Educators was held in 1991; in subsequent years, it took place alternately in Münster, Germany and Latvia. These conferences were dominated by the joy of experimentation, shared by both practitioners and theorists. The added value from conferences, initiated and partly funded by Westerners, was the ability to sit down at one table and jointly search for new educational paths for Latvian scholars and teachers. In addition to exile Latvians, cooperation with foreign scholars – later Honorary Doctors of the University of Latvia – intensified in the late 1980s and early 1990s.³⁰

Moscow-initiated leadership reform in education in 1988–1989 resulted in conflicts between “pro” and “anti” Moscow-minded higher officials, professors, and academicians in the field of education. This led to the “turbulence period” described in the article in this collection on curriculum development and paradigmatic change in Estonia.

To balance the uncertainty about national schools and centralisation of education management, further democratisation through wide grassroots initiatives continued the developments defined in 1987-88. These were school associations, subject associations, educational societies, etc.³¹

In June 1988, the Latvian Intelligence Forum also discussed issues of education. In May 1989, 4500 delegates participated in the Estonian Forum on Culture and Education. The Forum adopted a series of decisions and declarations on democratic development and governance in the field of education and culture and formed the Education Board (70 elected members)

³⁰ See A. Krūze (ed.), *Laikmets un personība* [Era and personality], vol. 15, Riga, RaKa, 2015, pp. 244-377.

³¹ In 1988 and subsequent years, associations of interwar period were restored or new associations were established such as School-principals association – 1990 (393 principals), Education Society of Estonia – 1988, and the Bengt Gottfried Forselius Society – 1989.

as an advisory body for development of education and culture.³² The Board had regular meetings and organised conferences and seminars. The Board worked until 1995 as an NGO for informal scientific, philosophical, and developmental negotiations and advised the government and society.

In Latvia in the late 1980s, the conflict between the Soviet legacy and the new demands of reforms intensified. In May 1990, Latvian minister of education Builis was replaced by the Popular Front activist Andris Piebalgs who was an experienced teacher and headmaster as well as employee of the Ministry of Education. Piebalgs was minister until August 1993, but later he chose a diplomatic career and became the first Latvia commissioner on the European Commission.

On 28 December 1990, the Ministry of Education published an order regarding reorganisation of research and methodological institutions of pedagogy including the Research Institute of Pedagogy, State Institute of Teacher In-service Training, Secondary Education Office (Cabinet), Vocational Education Office (Cabinet), and the Methodological Office (Cabinet) of Higher Education. The new Latvian Education Law was adopted on 19 June 1991. In March 1991, a new unit under the Ministry of Education and Science – Institute for the Development of Education – was established.³³ On 1 October 1991, the regulations ‘On allocation of academic degrees’ were adopted, and nostrification, or repeated recognition, of Soviet academic degrees began in Latvia.³⁴

1992–1996. Restored independence resulted in the search for new, active relations on various levels – schools, local communities, and the state. In various institutions, parallel attempts were made to create curricula for pre-school, general and secondary education by former pedagogy specialists and to start theoretically-based national curriculum development by researchers of educational sciences, following the principles developed during the 1987–1988 processes.³⁵ In addition, attempts were made to adapt teacher training to Western models. The system of academic grades and titles was also re-arranged according to Western models. From 1989–1992, the Teacher-In-Service Training Centre and the Institute of Pedagogical Research closed. So, the well-established system of methodical consultation and life-long learning was disrupted at a time most difficult for practitioners. In Latvia, institutional changes had already been made.

³² E.-S. Sarv, ‘Modernisation of Education in Estonia – a Brief Overview,’ manuscript, 1993, Tallinn University Estonian Pedagogical Archives and Museum, K45204-9.

³³ A. Šmite, *Pedagoģisko darbinieku tālākizglītība Latvijā (1944–1990)* [Further education of teaching staff in Latvia (1944–1990)], Rīga, RaKa, 2015.

³⁴ Pedagogy Museum Collection of the University of Latvia.

³⁵ See article in this collection by V. Rõuk, E-S Sarv, ‘The Estonian National School Curricula – Becoming and Development’ and V.-R. Ruus, E.-S. Sarv, ‘Changes in Estonian Curricula (1987–1999) and Some Thought on the Future’, in B. T. Peck, A. Mays (eds.), *Challenge and Change in Education: the Experience of the Baltic States in the 1990s*, New York, Nova Science Publishers, 2000, pp. 141-152.

In 1992, the Estonian Law on Education was created by the Ministry of Education so that the stabilisation and reconciliation process could begin.

Open Estonia Foundation (OEF), founded on 19 April 1990 by George Soros, encouraged and supported development in Estonian society. Many initiatives and developments in the field of education were supported by OEF such as long-term projects ‘School and Computer’ and ‘School with Distinction’ for school leaders and school teams (started in 1993 with the motto “through development to openness”; ‘Good Start’ (Step-by-Step) for kindergartens (1994); ‘Junior Achievement’; support of school reform (1994); and educational materials competitions. These were the most sustainable and influential projects and are still a natural part of the educational landscape, and 41% of all OEF finances went directly to education. The OEF had close contacts with sister organisations in Latvia and Lithuania where the Soros Foundation opened in 1992 and 1990 respectively.³⁶ There was Western and Nordic support for educational research, ICT training, and other projects³⁷ as well.

The 1990–1993 period is seen as an “educational policy vacuum” in Estonia by some researchers.³⁸ This did not mean there was a lack of ideas but rather a lack of procedures for democratic decision making and of reaching a shared understanding in collective undertaking.

All processes were strongly influenced by the fact that from 1988 to 1996, Estonian education administration structures were reorganized repeatedly.³⁹ Every reorganisation on the Ministry level meant reorganisation for central institutions dealing with educational research, teacher CPD, curriculum development, examination systems, etc. These disturbances meant losses in human and social capital and knowledge networks:⁴⁰ activists for renewal in educational science, CPD, curriculum development, methodological and education management/administration were often fired or moved to other positions

³⁶ ‘Avatud Eesti fond 1990–1995’ [Open Estonia Foundation 1990–1995], pp. 11-19. Available: https://oef.org.ee/fileadmin/media/valjaanded/aastaraamatud/1990_1995.pdf (accessed 12 February 2018).

³⁷ R. Ruubel, ‘Establishment of the Baltic-Nordic Network of Research and Development Centers on use of ICT in Teacher Training. Final Report, Estonia, 1999’, in Nordic Information bureaux in Tallinn, Riga, Vilnius and St. Peterburg (eds.), *Põhjala koostöö* [Nordic cooperation], Põhjamaade infobürood Tallinnas, Riias, Vilniuses ja Peterburis, 1998.

³⁸ P. Kreitzberg, *The Legitimation of Educational Aims: Paradigms and Metaphors*, Lund, Lund University, 1993, p. 5.

³⁹ 1988 – The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education and Post-Secondary Technical Education, and the Vocational Education Committee (of Estonia SSR) were combined into one Education Committee of ESSR (following reorganisation in USSR). In 1989, the Education Committee was reorganised into the Ministry of Education to administer general, vocational, and higher education. 1993 – the Ministry of Culture and Education was established to deal with overall education policy, higher education, and science while the State School Board (*Riigi Kooliamet*) had to deal with general and vocational education. In 1996, the Ministry of Culture and Education and State School Board were reorganised and a separate Ministry of Education was re-established.

⁴⁰ For example, see a description of changes in this collection: V. Rõuk, E-S. Sarv ‘The Estonian National School Curricula – Becoming and Development.’

and subject teacher networks lost traditional leaders (chief methodologists in STPDI, SIPR, inspectors in the Ministry of Education). As a result, strong non-governmental counter-movements arose that resulted in democratic initiatives such as the Estonian Education Society (1988), Estonian Council of Education (1989), and Estonian Forum of Education (1995).

To balance the turbulence in educational policy and higher leadership, initiatives arose to create professional and/or wider associations and organizations.

In April 1995, the Conference of Leaders of Education created an overview of developments in education and educational policies in the first years since regaining independence⁴¹ and declared the need of an umbrella organization. The Estonian Forum of Education was founded on 25 October 1995 and has influenced the Estonian concept of education and educational strategy ever since. Undoubtedly, the development of the view of Estonia as a learning society and school as a learning organisation in ‘Scenarios of Estonian Education – 2015’ was the most important outcome in the 1990s.⁴² On 24 March 1993, the Latvian Association of Educational Researchers was established and actively took part in the processes of change in the education system.

In 1996, the National Curriculum and the state exam system were legislated. The curriculum for pre-school institutions was adopted earlier.⁴³

This was also an uncomfortable and depressing situation for teachers and academic staff. The recognition of Soviet era education diplomas (teacher qualification and academic degrees) within the new system was the subject of lengthy discussions, particularly in the Board of Rectors of Higher Education. Dozens of teachers wrote and defended their master’s theses between 1990 and 1998 because they were unsure whether their Soviet diploma would qualify.

For similar reasons, the Master’s programme in Pedagogy was implemented at the University of Latvia in 1992/93. Beside pragmatic considerations, pedagogues felt the need to improve their knowledge of pedagogy and psychology as their approach to the theory and methodology of education had changed – the basics of education no longer stemmed from the one “correct” philosophy, Marxism-Leninism. New academic knowledge and research skills were needed to obtain the degree of *Mg. paed.* International cooperation of academic staff introduced European experience into the curriculum. When choosing optional courses, students mainly picked those related to the formation

⁴¹ By this time, dozens of societies and teacher associations had emerged. See V. Jüriso, E.-S. Sarv (eds.), *Eesti poliitiline ja haridusmõte. Eesti hariduskonverentsi lisamaterjal* [Political and educational thinking in Estonia. Materials of the Education Conference], Tallin, Haridustöötajate Koolituskeskus, 1995.

⁴² O. Aarna, *Haridusstrateegiline protsess Eestis ja Eesti Haridusfoorum* [Strategic process of Education in Estonia and the Estonia’s Forum of Education], *RiTo* [The Journal of the Estonian Parliament], no. 11, 2005, pp. 33-40. Available: <https://rito.riigikogu.ee/eelmised-numbrid/nr-11/haridusstrateegiline-protsess-eestis-ja-eesti-haridusfoorum/> (accessed 18 February 2018).

⁴³ See in this collection: Tiia Õun, ‘Development of a National Curriculum for Pre-School Child Care Institutions in Estonia.’

of student motivation, value orientation and personality development, oratory skills, integration of psychology and physiology in the pedagogical process, and stress management.⁴⁴ Many Master's programme graduates became authors of textbooks or books published in the series 'Pedagogical Library' by RaKa (up to 10 books per year were published in this series) and articles published in the magazine *Teacher* (RaKa, 1996–2011) under the headings 'Changes in Education', 'Value Education', 'Word for the scholar' and 'Experience'.

In the 1990s, education as a whole was legislated: Republic of Estonia Education Act (1992), Preschool Children's Institution Act (1993), Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act (1993), Private Schools Act (1993), Vocational Educational Institutions Act (1995), and Universities Act (1995). These acts supported and built the educational system of the newly independent state: the division of tasks between state and local government was established, and clear requirements were set for activities of educational institutions.

1996–2004 was the period of preparation for EU membership and reorganisation of the educational system. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania joined the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Strategy in preparation for EU membership. Both played an important role in the development of higher education and teacher training.

The Curriculum Center was established at the University of Tartu to organize the curriculum: the second version of the national curriculum and a simplified curriculum for students with learning difficulties was prepared with the participation of expert groups and the Education Forum in 2002.

At the turn of the new millennium, the thought of Estonia as a knowledge-based society and school/kindergarten as learning organisations became common.⁴⁵ The same approach developed in Lithuania.⁴⁶

The above periodisation proceeded from the substantive organisational development of Estonian general education. A more general model of development has been presented by Elisabeth A. McLeish, who analysed the transition of education from authoritarianism to democracy in several countries.⁴⁷ A 5-phase model revealed a shift from authoritarianism to democracy in schools and classrooms and on the student-teacher level: authoritarianism, dissatisfaction with the situation anti-authoritarian climate and ideological collapse (pre-phase); uncertainty (phase I); national elections (national policy formulation, phase II); local elections (clarification of the nature of the future

⁴⁴ A. Krüze, 'Pedagoģijas maģistrs – radoša personība, humāns skolotājs, mērķtiecīgs pētnieks [Master of Pedagogy – creative personality, humane teacher, purposeful researcher], *Skolotājs* [Teacher], no. 5, 1997, pp. 15-17.

⁴⁵ E-S. Sarv, 'On Structure, Content and Typology of School Development Plans in Estonia,' in S. Priimägi, E-S. Sarv (eds.), *The Opening World: Changing Educational Environment and Teacher Training*, Tallinn, TPÜ kirjastus, 2002, pp. 78-105.

⁴⁶ See P. Jucevičiene, G. Merkys, G-B. Reinert (eds.), *Towards the Learning Society: Educational Issues*, Frankfurt, Peter Lang, 2002, p. 362.

⁴⁷ E. A. McLeish, 'Introduction. Processes of Educational Transitions in Countries Moving from Authoritarian Rule to Democratic Government,' in E. A. McLeish, D. Phillips (eds.), *Processes of Transition in Education Systems*, Wallingford, Symposium Books, 1998, p. 11.

education system, phase III); education code (macro-level transition, phase IV); and implementation at school level (micro-level transition, phase V). The story of Estonian educational innovation can also be described, more or less, using this model; for example, broad democratic involvement before macro-level changes and national education policy and formulation of education requests ahead of elections.

The Baltic triangle – similarities, influences, and cooperation

In general, the renewal processes were similar in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The active stage of educational renewal in Lithuania and Latvia began in 1988.⁴⁸ The national movements in all three countries saw national education as an important part of becoming truly independent, national countries. The change in political power and re-discovering history hidden under Soviet rule (Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, mechanism and extent of deportations, etc.) meant that many leading educationalists who were required to be members of the communist party were seen as enemies or decided themselves to leave public and scientific life, even if they had been initiators of national movements and educational renewal in the 1980s. Others who had been active in the Soviet academic or/and political system revealed their previously hidden participation in the German army in an effort to show themselves as victims of the communist regime.⁴⁹ Critical analysis of personal memoirs published since the 1990s needs to be continued:⁵⁰ They reveal educationalists' personal tragedies and lies as well.

The period 1987–1991 has been called the Third Awakening in direct reference to Latvian, Estonian, and Lithuanian historical experience.⁵¹ New curricula and outcomes, educational kits, textbooks, methodologies, and pedagogical alternative systems were introduced. Interpretation of changes in pedagogy

⁴⁸ R. Bruzgelevičienė, *Lietuvos švietimo kūrimas 1988–1997* [Creation of education in Lithuania 1988–1997], Vilnius, Sapnų Sala, 2008, pp. 84–85.

⁴⁹ Without critical analysis of the role of individuals and their work through decades, it may be too superficial to reference those. This should be a matter of further research. Draft research is not yet finalised for publication.

⁵⁰ For more on memory research in Latvia published by the Social Memory Research Centre at the University of Latvia, see M. Kaprāns, 'Padomju laika sociālās reprezentācijas latviešu pēcpadomju biogrāfiskajā diskursā' [Social representations of Soviet era in Latvian post-Soviet biographical discourse], PhD diss., University of Latvia, 2012; M. Kaprāns, G. Strenga, N. Beckmann-Dierkes (eds.), *Atmiņu kopienas: atceres un aizmiršanas kultūra Latvijā* [Memory communities: A culture of remembrance and forgetting in Latvia], Rīga, Latvijas Universitātes Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts, 2016.

⁵¹ 'Restoration of the Republic of Latvia. 1987–1991,' National History Museum of Latvia. Available: http://lnvm.lv/en/?page_id=1027 (accessed 12 November 2019); J. Orn, 'Sada astat Kasvatsē ja Hariduse ilmunisest' [One hundred years since the publication of the Education and Uprising magazine], *Ūpetajate Leht* [The Teachers' Newspaper], 27 January 2017. Available: <http://opleht.ee/2017/01/sada-aastat-kasvatsē-ja-hariduse-ilmumisest/> (accessed 18 February 2019).

was done using metaphors (constructs) such as borrowing and lending (Iveta Silova,⁵² Gita Steiner-Khamzi⁵³) and translation (Ene-Silvia Sarv⁵⁴).

We can see remarkable changes in social and professional capital in the field of education in all Baltic countries that was sometimes accelerated by political ambitions of newly-founded political parties.

It was important to underline the interaction and support in educational renewal among progressive forces in Baltic Republics from 1987 on through cooperation between the National Awakening movements, Teacher In-Service Training Institutes, Institutes of pedagogical research and/or initiative groups of educational renewal, teacher organisations, university faculties, and others. In *Sajūdis*, Meilē Lukšienē and her co-workers in educational institutes actively learned from each other. Ramutē Bruzgelevičienē underlined that “the ideas of the progressive Estonian education reform ... were taken into consideration.”⁵⁵ An important event was the meeting of reform initiative delegations in Jūrmala, Latvia where the Baltic Council of Education was initiated. Estonian participants included future minister of education and parliament member Professor Peeter Kreitzberg and vice director of Teacher In-service Institute Ene-Silvia Sarv. Teachers, researchers, and opinion leaders from Latvian and Lithuanian ministries were represented as well. The next steps, in Tallinn, were the compilation and assignment of the main concepts of education renewal worked out by the Baltic Education Council (1988–1989)⁵⁶ and the creation of a moral codex for the teacher/pedagogue. *Dr. habil. phil.* Augusts Milts from Latvia compiled the Teacher Code of Ethics.⁵⁷

Baltic educators were also active in the All-Union pedagogical movement and supported the democratic wing of educationalists. From 20–22 December 1988, the All-Union Teachers’ Congress was held in Moscow. The battle between new democratic and totalitarian factions in education was ongoing. The most radical programmes were presented by Lithuania and Estonia. The published

⁵² I. Silova, ‘Rediscovering Post-Socialism in Comparative Education,’ in I. Silova (ed.), *Post-Socialism is not Dead: (Re)Reading the Global in Comparative Education*, Bingley, Emerald, 2010, pp. 1–24.

⁵³ G. Steiner-Khamzi, F. Waldow (eds.), *World Yearbook of Education 2012. Policy Borrowing and Lending in Education*, London and New York, Routledge, 2012.

⁵⁴ E.-S. Sarv, ‘Post-Socialist Transformations in Education as Translation (the Estonian Case),’ paper presented at European Conference of Educational Research (ECER), Berlin, Germany, 2011. Available: <https://slideplayer.com/slide/13038213/> (accessed 11 February 2019).

⁵⁵ R. Bruzgelevičienē, *Lietuvos švietimo kūrimas 1988–1997* [Creation of education in Lithuania 1988–1997], Vilnius, Sapnų Sala, 2008, p. 341.

⁵⁶ Personal archives and photos of E.-S. Sarv; R. Bruzgelevičienē, *Lietuvos švietimo kūrimas 1988–1997* [Creation of education in Lithuania 1988–1997], Vilnius, Sapnų Sala, 2008, pp. 84–85.

⁵⁷ A. Šmite, *Pedagoģisko darbinieku tālākizglitiba Latvijā (1944–1990)* [In-service education of teaching staff in Latvia (1944–1990)], Riga, RaKa, 2015.

version of resolutions⁵⁸ differed from the negotiated and adopted text.⁵⁹ Lithuania and Estonia protested this in the central newspapers and *Uchitelskaya Gazeta* (Teacher Gazette).

There are similarities in the central principles of educational renewal in all three countries:

- human value (humanisation of education) and parents' rights to choose their children's educational path,
- democratic values,⁶⁰
- preservation of national cultural heritage,
- need for society, educational institutions in particular, to be open to change, and
- power of new ideas.

While these principles were not unique to education in western democracies, these represented significant change in nations that emerged from Soviet centralist rule. Ideas for possible alternatives in education (non-mainstream education and private schools) emerged in all three countries.

Kreitzberg and Sirje Priimägi noted that considerable tension existed between policy makers, many of them part of a government bureaucracy still influenced by the former Soviet model, and practitioners who were anxious for change and the opportunity to develop a new and dynamic educational system.⁶¹ A new democratic model being formed in Lithuania⁶² influenced Estonian leading educational reformers and vice versa.

The main educational principles were similar in Estonia and Lithuania. Since 1988, these have included and continue to include humaneness, democracy, and nationhood. Cultural aspects were central in curriculum, as was fostering a democratic society in school culture. The paradigm change became a reality.⁶³ Judging by Latvian educational press, the guiding principles in education were learning culture and democracy, harmonisation of reforms and foreign experience with Latvian identity and national values, activation

⁵⁸ L. Tupikiene, interview by A. Ruubel, 'Leedu nõuab rahvuskooli' [Lithuania requires national school], *Haridus*, no. 3, 1989, pp. 21-22; R. Bruzgelevičienė, *Lietuvos švietimo kūrimas 1988–1997* [Creation of education in Lithuania 1988–1997], Vilnius, Sapnų Sala, 2008, pp. 311-313.

⁵⁹ This was the echo of contradictions in central political, pedagogical, and academic circles. *Uchitelskaya gazeta* [Teacher's Gazette] was "the *perestroika* minded."

⁶⁰ Democracy as a lifestyle, not just a political idea and practice.

⁶¹ P. Kreitzberg, S. Priimägi, 'Educational Transition in Estonia, 1987–1996,' in P. Beresford-Hill (ed.), *Education and Privatisation in Eastern Europe and the Baltic Republics*, Wallingford, Triangle, 1998.

⁶² The model was developed further by the Education Reform Council of the Lithuanian SSR – the first self-governance entity of the national level for education reform in Lithuania. R. Bruzgelevičienė, *Lietuvos švietimo kūrimas 1988–1997* [Creation of education in Lithuania 1988–1997], Vilnius, Sapnų Sala, 2008, p. 341.

⁶³ D. Kuolys, V. Vaicekauskienė, 'Introduction,' in M. Lukšienė, R. Bruzgelevičienė, V. Vaicekauskienė (eds.), *Educating for Freedom*, Vilnius, Alma Littera, 2014, pp. 20-21; R. Bruzgelevičienė, *Lietuvos švietimo kūrimas 1988–1997* [Creation of education in Lithuania 1988–1997], Vilnius, Sapnų Sala, 2008, p. 341.

of the learning process, selection of practical knowledge, and development of the child's individuality.⁶⁴ In 1989, Meilė Luksiene and her group announced the National School Concept with a strong cultural aspect and cultural meaning for education, central in Lithuanian reform ever since.⁶⁵

Educationalists accentuated that use of market models can diminish the humanistic role that education should play in a free society. The Estonian Platform of Education stressed that education should imbue people with all the values and aspirations expressed in the saying "man does not live by bread alone."⁶⁶

Private and/or alternative education sector regulations emerged as a relatively new item on the agenda of both educators and policymakers in all three countries.⁶⁷

In all Baltic Republics, another process emerged: Russian-speakers, including teachers, became a minority after half of century of being the majority and representing the "older brother." This was a painful process for many, and finding a new identity was not always successful. Some teachers felt connected to Russia, Russian media, and the Russian/Soviet interpretation of history.⁶⁸

Perestroika and re-gaining of independence in particular caused the rebirth of national schools and compulsory education in the titular nation's language. Edgar Krull underlines this ideal in connection of re-creation of citizenship and national values.⁶⁹ The return to religion, as part of national values, was strong in the early 1990s but only remained so in Lithuania. In Latvia, the Christian school movement became active thanks to enthusiasts. After the 1988 Popular Front of Latvia Congress, the issue of Christian education was raised. Pastor

⁶⁴ I. Kestere, 'Traditional and Modernity in the Schools of Latvia during the Periods of National Independence,' in A. Krūze et al. (eds.), *Pedagogy in the Changing Historical Conditions in the 20th Century in the Baltic countries*, Riga, RaKa, 2009, pp. 290-303.

⁶⁵ See P. Jucevičienė, 'Educational Science in Lithuania: From Yesterday to Tomorrow,' in S. Sting, C. Wulf (eds.), *Education in a Period of Social Upheaval. Educational Theories and Concepts in Central East Europe*, Münster, Waxmann, 1994, p. 44; M. Lukšienė, 'Pedagogy and Culture,' in M. Lukšienė, R. Bruzgelevičienė, V. Vaicekauskienė (eds.), *Educating for Freedom*, Vilnius, Alma Littera, 2014, pp. 34-58.

⁶⁶ E. Kareda, et al., *Main Principles for Reorganisation of the Education in Estonia*, Tallinn, Teacher In-Service Training Institute, 1989, pp. 12-13.

⁶⁷ P. Jucevičienė, J. Taruskienė, 'Privatisation in the Light of Educational Reform in Lithuania,' in P. Beresford-Hill (ed.), *Education and Privatisation in Eastern Europe and the Baltic Republics*, Wallingford, Triangle, 1998, pp. 22-34; N. Kersh, 'Aspects of the Privatisation of Education in Latvia,' in P. Beresford-Hill (ed.), *Education and Privatisation in Eastern Europe and the Baltic Republics*, Wallingford, Triangle, 1998, pp. 35-46; P. Kreitzberg, S. Priimägi, 'Educational Transition in Estonia, 1987-1996,' in P. Beresford-Hill (ed.), *Education and Privatisation in Eastern Europe and the Baltic Republics*, Wallingford, Triangle, 1998, pp. 47-59.

⁶⁸ R. Andersone, I. Kestere, L. Rutka, 'National Minority Education: Historical Experience and Contemporary Issues of Latvia,' *Series 'Pedagogical and Historical Sciences'*, vol. 127, 2015, pp. 254-275.

⁶⁹ E. Krull, 'Integration of Soviet Migrants as a Factor Shaping Identity and Citizenship Awareness in Estonia,' in A. Ross (ed.), *Learning for Democratic Europe, Proceedings of the Third conference of the Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe Thematic Network*, London, CiCe publication, 2001, pp. 261-267.

Juris Rubenis and the head of Sunday schools Vera Volgemute contributed, and by the end of 1989, 100 Sunday schools and training courses for Sunday school teachers had been organized. Latvian Radio broadcasted the programme ‘Sunday School.’ In the autumn of 1991, Christian School No. 1 in Riga opened under the guidance of Volgemute. Several schools in Riga and Latvia adopted this school model. In 1995, Riga Christian School No. 1 was admitted to the World Association of Christian Schools. However, as in Estonia, the activity of Christian schools declined.

During this time, it is clear that educational renewal widened its interpretation: in 1987–1988, the positivist Soviet view of education began to (self) democratise in the 1990s, as did society through the processes taking place in education.⁷⁰ The same conclusions were reached by Meilė Lukšienė and Ramutė Bruzgelevičienė,⁷¹ although the basic ideas of Lithuanian educational renewal were slightly different from those of Estonia.

Main ideals in Estonia – national school, democratisation and humanisation of education

The aims of the initial stage of educational renewal (1987–1989) originated from at least four sources:

1. Wide educational experience of teachers and other stakeholders formed a field of problems at the Organisational Developmental Game/Bees on 12–13 May 1987 with 180 participants;
2. “Learned experts” – researchers and specialist of education from academic institutions, including Pedagogic Academy of USSR academician Heino Liimets;
3. Pedagogic memory – traditional values from pre-Soviet and Soviet era; and
4. Best practices from Estonia and from the USSR.

All four constituted the wholeness and were interpreted and adapted to fit into the terms of *perestroika*. In this case, the main “translator” was innovative bureaucracy of the Ministry of Education and Minister Elsa Grechkina. Significantly, the first books on educational renewal were purposefully published in Russian⁷² to convince Moscow that this was based on *perestroika*, transparency, and innovation. For Estonians, this seemed wrong and moreover, caused Russia, Latvia, and Lithuania to adapt to these ideas more willingly

⁷⁰ E.-S. Sarv, *Kümme aastat paradigmuuutust* [Ten years of paradigmatic change], Tallinn, Tallinna Pedagoogikaülikool, 1998, pp. 18–19.

⁷¹ R. Bruzgelevičienė, *Lietuvos švietimo kūrimas 1988–1997* [Creation of education in Lithuania 1988–1997], Vilnius, Sapnų Sala, 2008, p. 341; R. Bruzgelevičienė, V. Vaicekauskienė (eds.), *M. Lukšienė. Educating for Freedom*, Vilnius, Alma littera, 2014.

⁷² For example: E. Grechkina, H. Liimets (eds.), *Na puti k novoi škole I: Škola Estonskoi SSR v obnovenii* [On the way to a new school I: the school of ESSR in renewal], Tallinn, ENSV Pedagoogika Teadusliku Uurimise Instituut, 1987. It included also the vision of foundations for future national curricula.

than Estonians. The references in those books reveal materials on perestroika from the Central committee of Communist Party and resources from Estonian educationalists (foreign literature on education was virtually non-existent in public libraries).

The general issues raised in these first books were about the need for *perestroika* in the education system of education the kinds of changes needed and desired. The short answer stressed full socialisation of youth, readiness to adapt in a changing social environment and cope in the personal sphere, and readiness to find creative and socially relevant solutions for problems of (Estonian) society and of personal life.⁷³

*Main principles for Reorganisation of the Public Education in Estonia*⁷⁴ was created by a small think-tank under the direction of Kreitzberg. The first chapter gave a short analytical overview of painful issues as a starting point for renewal. The main text was essentially an introduction, a “translation” of advanced ideas from around the world in the Estonian context. Background knowledge was derived from knowledge creation processes of 1987–1988 and from works such as John Dewey’s *Democracy and Education* and James Botkin’s *No Limits to Learning: Bridging the Human Gap. A Report to the Club of Rome*. At the time, those books were borrowed from Finnish friends and brought to Estonia secretly!

Main principles for Reorganisation covered all fields of education, teacher training, professional development, and education management. The three main lines of educational development – democratisation, humanisation, and setting a high value on education⁷⁵ – were widely accepted by the Estonian educational community.

Kreitzberg, Sarv, and Silla⁷⁶ showed that the content and meaning of the words of humanisation and democratisation changed substantially. In 1987–1988, these were rather one-dimensional, a metaphor, and the user had only a vague, ideal picture because of a general lack of actual democratic experience. However, meaning and understanding quickly developed, due to unrestricted access to Western literature and, first and foremost, cooperation and extensive joint activities. A wide range of people were engaged in the undertaking with notable synergy achieved on many occasions. Today we would call this

⁷³ E. Gretchkina, H. Liimets (eds.), *Na puti k novoi škole I: Škola Estonskoi SSR v obnovenii* [On the way to a new school I: the school of ESSR in renewal], Tallinn, ENSV Pedagoogika Teadusliku Uurimise Instituut, 1987, p. 8.

⁷⁴ E. Kareda et al., *Main Principles for Reorganisation of the Education in Estonia*, Tallinn, Teacher In-Service Training Institute, 1989.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 12.

⁷⁶ P. Kreitzberg, *The Legitimation of Educational Aims: Paradigms and Metaphors*, Lund, Lund University, 1993; E.-S. Sarv, *Kümme aastat paradigmuuutust* [Ten years of paradigmatic change], Tallinn, Tallinna Pedagoogikaülikool, 1998; E. Silla, ‘Haridusuuendus rahvusvahelise kogemuse kontekstis Eesti praktika näitel’ [Educational change/renewal in the context of international experience on the example of Estonian practice], Thesis, Tallinn Pedagogical University, 2002, pp. 27, 57, 112.

a grassroots process. In 1987–1990, humanisation and democratisation were not just keywords and aims; they were something practical – a method for renewal.

Neopositivist/alternative practices

A question of the popularity of non-mainstream educational/pedagogical systems and programmes (Waldorf, Montessori, Freinet, Christian education, etc.) in post-Soviet societies remains. Perhaps it was because teachers, not theorists, introduced them. “Alternative teachers” visited Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, and other countries at the height of the emotional stage of social rebirth. These teachers presented another approach to children, to the overall process of education, and to the teacher themselves. They seemed to be in harmony with the ideals of participatory democracy and humanism as well as being open towards religious beliefs and values.

In an attempt to negate subject-centeredness and stress child-centeredness, Estonia had developed six Waldorf schools (with 300 children), a private International Baccalaureate school, private Catholic school, some Montessori kindergarten groups, and Freinet-based pedagogy by 1992. Hundreds of teachers participated in alternative pedagogy courses: some were private initiatives, others were organised in the Teacher In-service Institute, and some took place in the teachers’ schooling centre. The International Seminar on Humanist/Waldorf education “The Threshold” operated from 1992 to 2002 in Estonia and drew more than one hundred participants from Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, and Ukraine. The teaching team was international (Finland, Sweden, United Kingdom, Germany, Estonia, Latvia) and included practitioners alongside teacher trainers and theorists. The experience and knowledge gained through alternatives enriched the pedagogical “toolbox” of all participants and initiated cooperation and knowledge exchange on the school-level among different countries.⁷⁷ These led to significant changes in public opinion and education laws.⁷⁸

The 1990s was an era of alternative schools and kindergartens in all three Baltic states that widened educational world-views and practices and enriched the repertoire of mainstream pedagogues.

⁷⁷ E.-S. Sarv, ‘Mõnest alaprobleemist’ [Some underlying problems], in *Demokraatiast ja humanismist õpetajale: Eesti haridusuuendus – hariduse demokraatiseerumine ja humaniseerumine* [On democracy and humanism for teachers: Estonian educational renewal – democratisation and humanisation of education], Tallinn, Riiklik Eksami- ja Kvalifikatsioonikeskus, 1997, pp. 63-68.

⁷⁸ J. de Groof, G. du Plessis, M. Smirova (eds.), *Religion, Law and Education; Tensions and Perspectives*, Oisterwijk, Wolf Legal Publishers, 2017, p. 186.

Conclusion

The metaphorical question put forth in the introduction is: Was the renewal of education a way or a chain? The way, a path, implies branching off and intersection with other paths, even if the general direction was certain. And a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, says the Estonian proverb.

Views from outside and inside may indicate the same results. However, the anatomy and motives of events and processes are often perceived differently and interpreted in the context of culture, experience, and views.

In general, the Estonian path from Soviet school and educational paradigm to Estonian national school and concept of national education had, despite all political and organisational turbulence, some specific characteristics: grassroots participation by teachers;⁷⁹ a strong visionary approach as indicated in the adoption of laws and regulations; existence of professional and informal associations; and influential political leadership.

Many years later Olav Aarna⁸⁰ wrote:

The development of educational strategic thinking and the process in Estonian education can be divided as the period of naive idealism (1988–1990), the development and implementation of the first-generation Education Law (1990–1995), and the maturation of concept of a learning society (1995–2000) ... One of the basic ideas for educational innovation was self-development of education. This road would expect a balance between state institutions (Ministry of Education, Committees, departments, etc.) and social entities (education councils, subject teachers' associations, etc). Unfortunately, this balance did not occur. The documents adopted at the conferences of educators, including the Education Platform and the documents of the Cultural and Education Forum (1989), were an expression of an attempt to reach a social agreement. But in an undeveloped democracy, they would have demanded an institutional outlet. Institutional output arose only partially in the form of laws, regulations and directives. Educational ideals formulated in 1987–1989 did not develop into a national educational policy.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Generation/creation/adaptation of new programs and learning kits for national school curriculum on the school level – for free subjects and courses, new subjects, humanities, real/natural sciences, social or/and practical branches in school (since 1988/89 in schools where the decision was done for school-experiment. The number of such schools increased year by year.); teacher professional activities, research and subject associations/societies, etc.

⁸⁰ Olav Aarna – Academician of the Estonian Academy of Sciences, Founder Member of the Estonian Education Forum (1995) and Chairman of the Board; Member of parliament (2003–2007), Rector of Tallinn Technical University and of Estonian Business School.

⁸¹ O. Aarna, 'Haridusstrateegiline protsess Eestis ja Eesti Haridusfoorum' [Strategic process of education in Estonia and the Estonia's Forum of Education], *RiTo* [The Journal of the Estonian Parliament], no. 11, 2005, pp. 33-40. Available: <https://rito.riigikogu.ee/eelmised-numbrid/nr-11/haridusstrateegiline-protsess-eestis-ja-eesti-haridusfoorum/> (accessed 12 September 2019).

Kreitzberg saw education renewal as an experiment in participatory democracy,⁸² reflecting the renewal process and outcomes.

Although the majority of definitions were unanimous, opinions concerning further development varied to such an extent that summing them up turned out to be an impossible task. In essence, various educational policy visions began taking shape, with greater or smaller stress on liberalism, conservatism, or social democracy. At the same time, participants acquired significant experience in the ups and downs of participatory democracy and later about how simple it was to liquidate participatory democracy. In all transition countries, changes met with strong, at times quite dramatic resistance. Resistance did not happen through open rhetoric, which quickly emerged as general usage keywords such as ‘democratisation of education,’ ‘school autonomy,’ ‘national upbringing,’ ‘humanisation,’ ‘pluralism,’ etc. Wide participation was rejected in what, according to Foucault,⁸³ could be called a parallel regime of knowledge/power. These changes restored the preferences, the social standing, and professionalism of the people who had been making decisions in education. On the one hand, this excluded making “raw” decisions, but on the other hand, it also excluded a large proportion of active participants.⁸⁴

After one year of participatory democracy practice and reorganisation of the Estonian Ministry of Education, curriculum and law reforms were applied to specialists in 1988. Accusations of making educational decisions in the silence of ministerial offices began. Gone was the dynamic of educational renewal and the enthusiasm of so many participants.

The wave of wide participation in educational renewal in 1987 was indeed a rare phenomenon in all of Europe. In 1988, the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the general public, compiled an educational platform in order to agree on common goals. The three main stresses were on democratisation of managing education, making it learner-centered, and making it valued. These three main points have played an indirect part in Estonian education ever since.

By 1997, Estonian Education Law, National Curriculum, and the structure of educational institutions were generally established, as it was also in Latvia and Lithuania. The national systems of education became a reality.

The 2000s brought deeper physical, organizational, and paradigmatic interplay with the European education space through exchange, conferences, adaptations, etc. It might be possible, that despite borrowing, translating, or legislating educational “otherness,” a symbiosis of different approaches appeared, at least in the practice of good and innovative teachers and schools. Today’s advantage is the internationalisation of education and research with opportunities to learn from the experience of the world for better integration

⁸² P. Kreitzberg, ‘Estonian System of Education’, manuscript, 2000, Personal archives of E.-S. Sarv.

⁸³ M. Foucault, ‘The Subject and Power,’ in H. Dreyfus, P. Rabinow (eds.), *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed., Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1983, pp. 208-226.

⁸⁴ P. Kreitzberg, ‘Estonian System of Education’, manuscript, 2000, Personal archives of E.-S. Sarv.

into the joint European space of education and science, by presenting Baltic traditions and values there.

In general, we can see that the main striving towards 21st century education was present in the idealistic picture of educational renewal in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The Delors report⁸⁵ proposed an integrated vision of education based on two key concepts: life-long learning and the four pillars of education – to know, to do, to be, to live together. Moreover, it considered the holistic approach – the formation of the whole person – to be an essential part of education's purpose. We found these key words in all programmes and concepts of education on the path all three Baltic countries have been taking since 1987.

Acknowledgement. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Iveta Ķestere, Aida Krūze, Aina Vilciņa, and Anita Šmite from Latvia; Violeta Jonynienė, Ramute Bruzgelevičienė, and Irena Pranskevičiūtė from Lithuania, and many others. My gratitude goes also to all authors whose articles widened my knowledge about the researched time period and to Vidimantas Raudys for his table-overview of the Lithuanian transition period.

⁸⁵ J. Delors et al., *Learning: the Treasure within: Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for Twenty-first Century*, Paris, UNESCO Publishing, 1996.