

Education for statehood as a fundamental element of civil defence education in Czechoslovakia in the years between 1918 and 1939

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Abstract

This article is a reflection of statehood education as a basic element of education. The research focuses on the period after the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918 to the time before World War II in 1939. The aim of the research is to explore the basic approaches to the implementation of education for statehood in terms of the creation of a new state in relation to civil defence education in Czechoslovakia. The comparative historical analysis will be utilized as the research method on the subject of education for statehood. The comparative historical analysis is used as a specific tool for qualitative research. This is a procedure which can be applied to the statehood issue of education to its basic elements, by which it will be possible to learn more about this phenomenon and subsequently explain it.

Perceptions and ideas about the tasks of the state have gradually changed and evolved. This means the creation and development of the legal order, providing security and order within the state. Education for statehood was directed to such education and creating an environment so that every citizen, irrespective of nationality, religion, political opinion and social environment in which they live, has the physical and mental ability and willing to enthusiastically and faithfully fulfill their civic duties.

Keywords: Statehood, Czechoslovak Republic, civil defence education

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1. Problem statement

This paper aims to examine the basic approaches to implementing statehood education under the conditions of a newly-established state in relation to military training in Czechoslovakia. After the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and after World War I, the new awareness of a national identity and national sovereignty was one of the main directions after the establishment of the independent Czechoslovak Republic on 28 October 1918. One of the consequences of World War I for Czechoslovakia was a boom in pacifism. This is an attitude that rejects war and violence and sees the possibility of a peaceful resolution of international disputes under all conditions. The main idea of the post-war period was the idea of peace.

The emergence of an independent state also necessitated independence in the field of education; however, more incisive changes did not occur in this field after the establishment of the Republic. The basis of school legislation was taken over from the days of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the existing laws were left in force. Organization of national education in the Czech lands was based mainly on the Imperial Act of 1869 and its amendment in 1883. Yet some of the necessary changes had to be carried out immediately after the establishment of the independent state - cultivation of Austrian patriotism was abolished, and it was ordered that the image of the emperor be removed from schools.

Peace-thinking education was to have been cultivated at an early age so that peace education could penetrate into the schools, and so that the Comprehensive Peace Day would be introduced into schools (Wurmová, J. p. 130, 1924). In terms of education, strong emphasis was placed on statehood education. Statehood education and patriotism were seen in three main ways, which were state propaganda (proclamation and dissemination of ideas), civil defence education and political education (Krofta, p. 3, 1935). The objective of this orientation and education was love and devotion to the state, having a sense for the state, understanding its significance, a sense of duty to work for the state and make sacrifices for it, and to contribute, according to one's capabilities, to its security and consolidation, and to its successful external and internal development.

2. Methodology

A comparative historical analysis is used as the method of researching the subject of statehood education in the Czechoslovak Republic between 1918 and 1939. This method is used abroad (e.g. Gall et al., 2003; Sweting, 2001). Each question that we examine in pedagogy has its genesis. "The comparative historical analysis therefore does not only constitute a key method for historical pedagogy, but it is in fact the initial step in resolving any pedagogical issue" (Jůva, 2009). Comparative historical analysis is therefore referred to as a method, which, together with empirical research of educational reality, forms two basic sources of information for creating pedagogical knowledge (Maňák, Švec, & Švec, 2005).

The comparative historical analysis is regarded as a specific type of qualitative research. In general, we understand analysis as the analysis of a certain structure whose essence is the breakdown of the monitored unit into simplified components. This means the conversion of a certain phenomenon - the issue of statehood education - to its basic elements, by which we can better understand this phenomenon and subsequently clarify and explain it (Julínek et al., 2004). The comparative historical method synthesizes the analogous elements identified via a specific analysis and determines their mutual relations. The comparative historical analysis method identifies similarities and differences on the basis of which it determines analogous context and relations, both external or internal, substantial or insubstantial, etc. (Čapek et al., 1985). The comparative historical analysis monitors and compares statehood instruction and military training in development. This method therefore combines two fundamental aspects – historical research and comparative analysis. Historical research is specific in

that the object of its scientific interest does not exist here and now. Unlike in empirical research, here we are unable to observe it or subject it to experiments (Maňák, Švec, & Švec, 2005). During the processing of this topic, we proceeded within the stages of a comparative historical analysis (Jůva, 2009):

- selection of pedagogical facts, analysis thereof, exact description and organization from a historical and logical point of view in order to create a clear basis for further research activities;
- relational analysis that reveals the dependencies between the studied pedagogical facts and their relationships to the broader social conditions under which they occur (i.e. inclusion in the cultural, political, social and economic context) – a comparison is carried out during this stage;
- critical evaluation of the results of the previous analysis and comparison (in order to define priorities, relationships, dependencies, and the influences that have shaped the studied pedagogical problems, and which manifested in subsequent development).

3. Findings from statehood education

The basic task was to build a school system for the young state based on new, national and democratic principles, as well as unify the educational system throughout the national territory. (Morkes, 2002) The statehood education of the population was legislatively regulated in 1919 by Act No. 67 Coll., on the organization of courses on civic education for people (Act 67/1919 Coll.). This led to civic education becoming the subject of state and local care - Section 3: "The costs of organizing such courses are borne by contributions from cities, municipalities, ... and from state subsidies." This Act introduced mandatory organization of civic education, but participation therein remained voluntary. The role of public care for civic education was to educate people for the newly-formed republic with focus on the following areas (Matula, p. 6, 1937):

- civic study of the state system, explanation of the difference between the monarchy and the Republic,
- explanation of economic issues of the state and municipalities,
- the historical development and independence of the Czechoslovak Republic,
- the importance of democracy,
- social conditions,
- moral foundations of the state, devotion to the whole, civic virtues and responsibilities,
- the basis of the health care system and physical education, and others.

From the perspective of a new state, the introduction of civic education as a new curriculum subject by Act No. 226/1922 Coll., amending and supplementing acts on general and civic schools, was significant. Section 1, Paragraph 1: The compulsory curriculum subjects in general (people's) schools are: religion; civic education and training; reading and writing; teaching language; sums with the study of geodetic shapes, biology, natural sciences, geography and history, in particular focused on the home and homeland; drawing; singing, handicraft and physical education. Teaching about the domestic economy may be introduced as a special curriculum subject.

Educational and learning efforts reacted to the cultural and political needs of citizens and the state. Social development in Europe, in particular the strengthening of Nazi tendencies in neighbouring Germany, led to expanding civic training and education by military training. The tasks of self-defence, to which education and training enables individuals, also include common defence of material and cultural property and the health and life of citizens. (Matula, p. 7, 1937). The state cares for the safety

of citizens and their property. The goal of education was to prepare citizens to be able to defend their state against potential enemies.

Military training was to be mainly moral and physical training and civil defence was not to be focused only on physical education and military training. The fundamental orientation of military training was to familiarize citizens with the possibilities that can be used for national defence and self-defence. The defence of peace and the support of international cooperation gradually gained in importance. T. G. Masaryk was a great role model. Working for peace was to be a life expression and mental attitude (Čapek, 1938).

Perceptions and ideas about the tasks of the state gradually changed and evolved. For a long period the powers of the state were depleted from the protection of the state entity, its citizens and the state's territory, compared to outside tasks. Furthermore, it was also necessary to create and develop a legal order, care for security and order within a state. Gradually, the activity of the state expanded in other directions. In order to fulfil its tasks, the state had to secure the necessary funds and take care of the state's and population's economic development, the development of the infrastructure of the time, and the better education of population. One of the most important places where state-forming and civic virtues are to be brought to life are schools (Novotný, 1927).

Statehood education, so-called adult education care, was focused on such education and on creating an environment where each citizen, regardless of nationality, religion, political opinion and the social environment in which he lives, is physically and mentally capable and willing, with enthusiasm, to faithfully fulfil his civil obligations; if necessary, then to defend the state and democracy even with weapons (Krofta, p. 18, 1935). Although the basic orientation was specified in various publications, a coherent plan was absent. There were certain orientations, e.g. Masaryk's Adult Education Institute, which called for a unified plan for statehood education. This request was focused on the government so that it would implement a system of state economic education, and civil defence education by organizing courses, seminars and other impactful forms.

State civic education and statehood education primarily included civil defence education. Training citizens was to mainly focus on the so-called civil defence of the nation, i.e. the ability to maintain and defend the independent Czechoslovak state against all potential enemies at home and abroad. Civil defence education included four basic areas (Krofta, 1935):

- a) Instruction - training related to war. This consisted of training citizens to properly protect themselves from dangers and attacks. Training could only be organized by experts in cooperation with, for example, the Czechoslovak Red Cross, doctors, fire-fighters and others.
- b) Care for public health. This area was aimed at supporting physical training in order to improve the physical fitness of the nation. This was taken into consideration in the context that the fitness of the nation assumes care of public health and recreation of the population. It was perceived as care for the body and mental health.
- c) Economic and moral strength. Emphasis was placed on developing the character of citizens, strengthening solidarity and building good relations between different classes and layers of the nation.
- d) The civil defence of the nation itself. The focus in this area was on the ability of the nation to live in a free state, to maintain the state and defend it against attack on the basis of the courage of the citizens. The courage must be based on feelings of patriotism and love for the country.

3.1. Specifics of preparation and civil defence education

The concept of civil defence education or military training in the interwar period between 1918 and 1939 is associated with the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic, the subsequent development of the Republic and the international situation. We can find a conception wherein the hierarchy of moral and

educational values was emphasized, among which can be included humanity, statehood and nationality. The implementation and defence of the specified ideals was considered the duty of every person, the nation and the state. The Czechoslovak Republic had no inclination to war activities; there were no causes and no territorial claims beyond the border demarcation. However, the defence of borders, territory and population were the fundamental objective in the education and training of the population (Milič, p. 43, 1935). A need was perceived from early youth to educate the expectant nation not to extreme militarism, but to honest military education (Krýsa, p. 105, 1938).

Civil defence was perceived primarily as an ability to defend against an attacking enemy. Emphasis was placed primarily on increasing civil defence, wherein it is necessary to educate the entire nation and all citizens toward such a goal. Civil defence education applied to all residents of the state, and military education only to those who would defend the state militarily. Military training was a special kind of civil defence education. It was known that during defence of the state, not only is the army on the field decisive, but that agriculture and industry and their performance and self-sufficiency were also important (Dolenský, 1929).

Training of youths to improve civil defence during schooling was primarily the responsibility of schools. This obligation was subsequently transferred to the sports associations, for example Sokol. Pupils were considered to be potential men for military service, and hence the idea of civil defence education at schools. The idea was presented that in the interest of the future of the state, it would be necessary to introduce civil defence education as a precursor to military service. An obstacle to the proper performance of military service was a lack of love for the nation and the state. This view stems from the fact of the existence of wars in the world; it is essential that teachers discuss the matter with the students and prepare them. Civil defence education and special military training must be a life expression of the nation in peacetime. One of the objectives of civil defence education at schools was the training of young Czechoslovak citizens in physical and moral courage and perseverance in the event of a defensive war.

Exercises of physical and moral stamina, patience, humility, overcoming oneself and dedication were considered suitable preparation for military service. The greatest emphasis was placed on education to love the nation, the state and its functionaries, the people, the national culture and others. During lessons, in each subject the aim was to promote awareness of national pride among pupils, e.g. a suitable description of historical heroes as examples of the struggle for freedom, use of examples of courage and bravery in ordinary life, and the use of physics, chemistry and geography to point out connections between these things. The concept was spread that the idea of civil defence can penetrate into all subjects (Dolenský, 1929; Krofta, 1935).

A specific example of preparing for civil defence in national schools was the integration of military training in the natural sciences - biology (Smékal, Úlehla, 1930). This consisted of the introduction to the theme in three main areas – breathing, poisonous gases and civilian anti-aircraft defence. In terms of education, basic information about the oxygenation of the body during breathing was explained and the possibility of poisoning and lack of oxygen supply to the body was informed about. In this context, the principle of gas masks or protective masks, filter functions and the use of so-called activated carbon during air filtration were explained. In connection with the defence of the population, topics that were dealt with included the possibility of sheltering, making shelters more resilient and the basic equipment in shelters for the possible survival of the population. Poisonous gases were characterized as a weapon of war and were classified according to harmful effects on human beings. Civilian anti-aircraft defence was presented with the aim of increasing the protection of the population during air raids.

4. Conclusion

Statehood education and military preparation primarily focused on awakening love of country, nation, state, and of instilling a sense of duty thereto and encouraging efforts for protecting one's home. The aim was to focus mental and physical strengths to defend the state. Primarily, civil defence education in the broader sense and military training was to be emphasized and deepened at schools. Civil defence education is clearly seen as a certain foundation and a precursor to military education. School training was to support the subsequent physical fitness of the army, and its spirit. The foundation for defence training and education of the entire nation from childhood was thus laid out. The basic idea was that advanced military abilities can avert a war, or at least reduce its negative consequences.

A nation that was considered safe was one that educated the population to carry out creative activities with the same care as that used for education in defensive awareness. Civil defence education was the vital interest of the national unit itself, and its level was a contemporary measure of security. Civil defence involved a sense of responsibility, duty, order and discipline, and it was also an expression of patriotism and civic solidarity. The aim was to support civil defence for the entire population, regardless of age and whether they were subject to military duty.

In the first decade of the Czechoslovak Republic, the state did not pay specific attention to the issues of military training, and military training at schools was not implemented during this period. The cultural and political events after 1930 in Europe stressed the need for orientation on, and the need to implement systematic preparation for military training. Since 1932, cultural, sports and other organizations organized various activities through which they wanted to increase the civil defence of the population.

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