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Historical and Social Aspects of the Politicization of Pedagogical Education in Soviet Georgia (1921–1932)

Abstract: *This article examines the politicization of pedagogical education in Soviet Georgia between 1921 and 1932, focusing on the transformation of educational thought under Bolshevik rule. Drawing on archival materials, government decrees, pedagogical textbooks, and works by Georgian and international educators, the study explores how Soviet ideological imperatives reshaped educational policies, teaching methods, and pedagogical theory. Particular attention is paid to the adaptation and reinterpretation of American and European educational models, including the ideas of John Dewey, within the Soviet ideological framework. The article argues that the early Soviet period was characterized by intensive pedagogical experimentation; however, these innovations gradually became subordinated to Marxist-Leninist ideology and political objectives. The study demonstrates that the increasing politicization of education contributed to the centralization of educational governance, the marginalization of alternative pedagogical approaches, and the establishment of a unified Soviet educational model aimed at shaping the "new Soviet citizen". The findings contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between education, ideology, and nation-building in Soviet Georgia during the formative decades of Soviet rule.*

Keywords: *Soviet Georgia; politicization of education; Soviet pedagogy; educational reforms; ideology; pedagogical textbooks.*

Introduction

The Sovietization of education constituted one of the most important instruments through which the Bolshevik regime sought to

transform society and shape the "new Soviet person". Throughout the Soviet Union, educational institutions were expected not only to transmit knowledge but also to serve as mechanisms of ideological socialization and political integration.

In Soviet Georgia, the establishment of Bolshevik rule in 1921 initiated profound transformations in pedagogical education, educational policy, and teaching practices. Existing educational traditions were gradually restructured in accordance with Marxist-Leninist principles, while pedagogical institutions became increasingly subordinated to political objectives. At the same time, the 1920s were characterized by intensive pedagogical experimentation, including the reception and adaptation of European and American educational ideas, particularly those associated with John Dewey and the concept of the labour school.

The period between 1921 and 1932 represents a particularly important stage in the history of Soviet education. These years witnessed both attempts to introduce innovative pedagogical approaches and the gradual consolidation of ideological control over educational institutions. By the early 1930s, pedagogical pluralism had largely disappeared, giving way to a centralized and standardized educational model closely aligned with Marxist-Leninist doctrine.

Although Soviet educational policies have attracted considerable scholarly attention, the politicization of pedagogical education in Soviet Georgia remains insufficiently explored. Existing studies have predominantly focused either on general histories of Soviet pedagogy or on institutional developments, while the specific mechanisms through which political ideology reshaped pedagogical theory, textbooks, and educational practices in Soviet Georgia have received less attention.

This article examines the politicization of pedagogical education in Soviet Georgia between 1921 and 1932. Drawing upon archival materials, government decrees, pedagogical textbooks, and contemporary scholarly literature, the study analyzes the interaction between ideology and education, the reception of foreign pedagogical models, and the gradual establishment of a unified Soviet educational framework (Basiladze & Tavgiridze, 2024). It argues that the increasing politicization of pedagogical education transformed both the content and the institutional organization of education, ultimately subordinating pedagogical thought to the ideological priorities of the Soviet state.

The article conceptualizes politicization as the process through which educational theory, institutions, and pedagogical practices became subordinated to the ideological objectives of the Soviet state.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Research on Soviet pedagogy and educational reforms has generated a substantial body of scholarship examining the relationship between education, ideology, and state-building in the Soviet Union. Classical studies by Soviet scholars such as Makarenko, Danilov, Esipov, Gruzdev, Babansky, and Skatkin played an important role in shaping Soviet pedagogical theory and educational practice. These works, however, were largely produced within the ideological framework of Marxism-Leninism and therefore reflected the official educational doctrine of the Soviet state.

In the Georgian context, important contributions to the history of pedagogy and educational development have been made by scholars such as G. Tavzishvili, G. Kiknadze, D. Kipshidze, D. Nikolaishvili, S. Sigua, P. Janelidze, Sh. Sikharulidze, K. Chkuaseli, U. Oboladze, D. Lortkipanidze, G. Sikharulidze, Iv. Chkuaseli, and Vl. Gagua, among others. Their studies provide valuable insights into the institutional development of Georgian education and pedagogical thought.

Recent historiography has increasingly emphasized the role of education as an instrument of ideological transformation and social engineering in Soviet societies. Scholars have demonstrated that educational institutions functioned not only as sites of knowledge transmission but also as mechanisms for the formation of political loyalty and Soviet identity. Within this broader framework, the politicization of pedagogy may be understood as a process through which educational theory, curricula, and teaching practices became subordinated to the ideological priorities of the Soviet state.

Despite the growing scholarship on Soviet education, the specific mechanisms through which Soviet ideology transformed pedagogical education in Soviet Georgia during the formative decades of Soviet rule remain insufficiently studied. Existing research has primarily focused on institutional histories or general developments in Soviet pedagogy, while less attention has been devoted to the interaction between political ideology, pedagogical textbooks, and the reception of Western educational models within the Georgian educational context.

The present study approaches the politicization of pedagogical education as a historical process shaped by the interaction between ideology, educational policy, and pedagogical practice. Particular attention is paid to the circulation and reinterpretation of foreign pedagogical ideas, the role of textbooks in disseminating Soviet ideology, and the gradual establishment of a unified educational model throughout the

Soviet Union. The studies on Soviet modernization have increasingly interpreted education as a key instrument of social engineering, nation-building, and ideological transformation. Within this perspective, schools are viewed not merely as institutions of knowledge transmission but also as important sites of political socialization and identity formation.

Research Methodology

The study employs qualitative historical research methods combining archival analysis, document analysis, and historical interpretation. The empirical basis of the research consists of archival materials preserved in Georgian archives, government resolutions concerning educational policy, pedagogical textbooks used in higher educational institutions across the Soviet Union, contemporary press publications, and scholarly literature.

Particular attention is devoted to official resolutions adopted by Soviet authorities between 1921 and 1932, as these documents reflect the changing political priorities that shaped educational policy. Pedagogical textbooks published and used throughout the Soviet Union, including those translated into Georgian, were analyzed in order to assess the extent to which ideological principles influenced educational content.

The study further examines published pedagogical works by Georgian and foreign scholars, allowing for a comparative assessment of the reception, adaptation, and reinterpretation of European and American educational ideas within Soviet Georgia. By situating educational developments within their broader political context, the research seeks to explore the relationship between ideology, educational reform, and pedagogical thought during the early Soviet period.

The research was conducted in several interconnected stages. The first stage involved defining the research objectives, developing the methodological framework, and reviewing existing scholarship on Soviet and Georgian educational history. Particular attention was paid to the historical and pedagogical heritage of the period and to the broader political and social context of educational reforms.

The second stage focused on the collection and analysis of primary sources, including resolutions of the Central Committee (1921–1932), archival materials, pedagogical literature, press publications, and textbooks used in Soviet schools, including those in Soviet Georgia.

These sources were examined in order to assess the extent to which educational policies and pedagogical content were shaped by Party directives and broader ideological imperatives.

In the final stage, the findings derived from the analysis of archival and published sources were synthesized and interpreted in order to identify the principal trends characterizing the politicization of pedagogical education in Soviet Georgia during the early Soviet period.

Sovietization and the Search for a New Educational Model

Following the annexation of Georgia by Soviet Russia, the country came under the governance of the Council of People's Commissars, a body composed of Bolsheviks acting under directives from Moscow. From the 1920s onward, Soviet schools entered a period characterized by intensive pedagogical experimentation and reform. The education system was led by specialists familiar with the most advanced educational ideas of their time (Konstantinov, Medinski, & Shabaeva, 1964). Rapid industrialization necessitated the expansion of both secondary and vocational education. Simultaneously, the establishment of a unified educational system – from kindergarten to university – was intended to shape a new type of individual capable of building a new socialist society.

In the early 1920s, Soviet educational reformers demonstrated considerable interest in selected American pedagogical ideas, particularly those associated with John Dewey. Dewey's philosophy emphasized experimental learning, student-centered education, and the close relationship between schooling and social life (Lunacharsky, 1924). After the publication of *School and Society*, Dewey's progressive educational ideas gained significant recognition in Russia and influenced the educational reforms initiated in the Soviet Union.

The reception of Dewey's ideas was facilitated by Soviet educators such as Stanislav Shatsky. In his autobiographical work *My Pedagogical Way* (*Мой педагогический путь*), Shatsky acknowledged Dewey's influence, emphasizing the importance of testing educational ideas through practical experience and considering children's interests in the design of educational programs (Shervashidze, 2009). Soviet educators were encouraged not merely to familiarize themselves with Dewey's work, but to study it carefully as a source of innovative educational thinking (Tavdgiridze, Shervashidze, Mamuladze, & Sherozia, 2019). Between 1922 and 1925, several of Dewey's major works – in-

cluding *School and Child*, *Schools of the Future*, *Democracy and Education*, and *Psychology of Thought and Pedagogy* – were translated into Russian and repeatedly republished.

Nevertheless, Soviet reformers did not simply replicate American educational models. Rather, they selectively adapted and reinterpreted them within the framework of Marxist-Leninist ideology. Individualized approaches to education were gradually replaced by collectivist principles, while pedagogical methods were modified to correspond to the ideological objectives of the Soviet state (Basiladze, Chokhonelidze, & Kostava, 2016).

The Unified Labour School and Soviet Educational Experimentation

During the process of constructing the new school system, Communist Party leaders debated a variety of educational models. One proposal advocated the establishment of commune schools, which sought to integrate education directly with industrial production. According to this model, students would participate in an intensive schedule combining academic studies with productive labour (Pinkevich, 1926). However, such proposals were ultimately rejected. Instead, the Bolshevik government adopted the doctrine of the Unified Labour School introduced by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee in 1918 (Sinicky, 1923).

The concept of the Unified Labour School was formally established through the decrees *Basic Principles of the Unified Labour School* and *Regulations on the Unified Labour School of the Russian Federation*, which became mandatory throughout the Soviet republics. Developed by leading Communist figures such as Anatoly Lunacharsky, Nadezhda Krupskaya, and Panteleimon Lepeshinsky, the model drew inspiration from Dewey's ideas while incorporating specifically communist principles of upbringing and education (Pinkevich, 1926).

Lunacharsky, the People's Commissar for Education, explicitly linked educational reform to the needs of the proletarian state, asking: "What kind of school is possible in a proletarian state?" (Lunacharsky, 1924). The guiding principle of the Labour School was the idea of "teaching everyone to work". Collective labour was viewed as essential for preparing future citizens for participation in socialist society. Labour education became a separate school subject, receiving substantial instructional time (Sinicky, 1923).

The Soviet school was designed as both unified and labour-oriented. Unity referred to the continuity of education from preschool to higher education, while allowing limited pedagogical flexibility at the local level (People's Commissar for Education, 1918). Physical and aesthetic education also received significant attention, including sports, music, painting, games, and excursions. The notion of independent student activity became increasingly important, as students were expected to develop through practical experience (Sinicky, 1923).

Despite these innovations, the implementation of the Labour School generated considerable dissatisfaction. Parents opposed the abolition of religious instruction, while schools suffered from shortages of textbooks and inadequate infrastructure. Many teachers, trained in traditional gymnasium systems, struggled to implement the new pedagogical principles effectively. Consequently, tensions emerged between revolutionary educational aspirations and everyday school realities.

Complex Teaching and Integrated Curricula

One of the most significant pedagogical innovations introduced in Soviet schools during the 1920s was the so-called *complex method* (*комплексное обучение*). This approach emerged from attempts to overcome traditional subject-based instruction and to establish a closer connection between education, practical activity, and everyday life. Instead of teaching individual disciplines separately, the complex method sought to organize learning around broader themes and practical problems derived from students' social and productive environments.

The theoretical foundations of complex teaching were closely associated with progressive educational ideas and, particularly, with the influence of John Dewey. Soviet educators argued that knowledge should not be fragmented into isolated subjects but integrated around themes reflecting the realities of social and economic life. Consequently, educational programmes were reorganized around broad thematic complexes such as *nature*, *labour*, and *society* (Konstantinov, Medinski, & Shabaeva, 1964).

The introduction of complex programmes was also closely connected with the ideological objectives of the Soviet state. Educational content increasingly emphasized collective labour, social responsibility, and political consciousness. Schools were expected not merely to transmit knowledge but to prepare pupils for active participation in socialist construction. In this respect, educational reforms became an important mechanism for shaping the "new Soviet person."

However, the implementation of complex teaching generated considerable controversy among educators. Many teachers experienced difficulties in organizing integrated lessons, particularly because they had been trained within traditional disciplinary frameworks. Critics argued that the complex method often led to insufficient mastery of individual subjects and weakened students' systematic knowledge. As contemporaries frequently noted, pupils sometimes "learnt everything and nothing at the same time."

These problems became increasingly evident during pedagogical discussions in the mid-1920s. At the Teachers' Congress held in 1925, many participants expressed concerns regarding the effectiveness of integrated curricula and emphasized the need to strengthen subject-based instruction. Although the complex method remained officially endorsed for several years, criticism gradually intensified, contributing to the subsequent revision of Soviet educational policy.

Soviet Pedagogical Innovators: Between Experimentation and Ideology

Despite the shortcomings of early Soviet educational reforms, the Soviet leadership initially demonstrated a relatively tolerant attitude toward pedagogical experimentation. During the 1920s, prominent educators were encouraged to develop innovative teaching methodologies, organizational models, and educational institutions. These experiments profoundly influenced the development of Soviet pedagogy and shaped educational reforms across the Soviet republics, including Soviet Georgia.

Anton Makarenko: Collective Upbringing and Communist Education

Anton Makarenko was among the most influential Soviet educators who both theoretically and practically developed the principal foundations of communist upbringing. His work addressed basic issues such as the child's interaction with the environment, the principles of targeted educational influence on upbringing, the development of strong ties between the child and society, and the creation of a positive moral atmosphere, which he regarded as the essence of upbringing (Kipshidze, 1957).

Makarenko's educational philosophy was implemented in his colony, a combined teaching, training, and educational institution. He viewed students' achievements as a pedagogical motivator

(Makarenko, 1949). The colony's pupils were engaged into simple agricultural work and repair works to destroyed buildings. Despite working only four hours a day, they were paid equivalent to a full workday. The "colonists" (students) were divided into squads, each led by a designated leader. The members of the squad had mutual responsibility for each other and lived as one family, despite their age. Each colonist could express and demonstrate their abilities. Humiliation of the younger ones was considered unacceptable. The elders always protected the newcomers, and any conflicts were resolved by the colonists collectively through general meetings. The colony also included fully equipped secondary school, allowing students to receive formal education, acquire vocational skills, and prepare for university studies. In addition to labor-based learning, Makarenko placed significant emphasis on literature. From the very first days, a library was established in the colony and students regularly participated in reading sessions, including reading aloud (Kipshidze, 1957).

Stanislav Shatsky and Experimental Education

From 1919 to 1932, Stanislav Shatsky headed Russia's first experimental station for public education (Balashov, 2012). The institution operated in two divisions: one in Moscow and another in the rural Kaluga region. It included a network of schools, kindergartens, extra-curricular and scientific organizations and educational programs. The station also owned lands, where student-colonists engaged in cultivation and crop management as part of their educational experience. The station aimed to develop an innovative pedagogical system. Shatsky assembled a team of instructors/teachers, who not only taught and raised children, but also studied their psychology. His team introduced new teaching methodologies. Shatsky placed particular emphasis on adolescents' experiences. He regarded the process of upbringing as an integral component of social life and paid special attention to the role of environmental influences in adolescent development (Menshikov, 2007).

Pavel Blonsky and the New Soviet School

Pavel Blonsky was a prominent educational theorist, who criticized the traditional school system and justified the foundations for building a new school (Menshikov, 2007) based on labor and self-education. He believed that mental, aesthetic, moral and atheistic education, play an important role in shaping an individual's character. In his

book "School of Labor", Blonsky proposed practical recommendations for incorporating labor education of children into curriculum. The idea of the book was simple: modern people, including intellectuals, lack technical literacy. He argued that technology should become a core subject in modern schools, as both natural and social sciences are interconnected with technological advancements. Consequently, Blonsky argued that modern science should be taught in schools in direct relation to everyday life and practical activities, ultimately transforming schools into industrial institutions.

Lev Vygotsky and the Cultural-Historical Approach

L. Vygotsky developed a cultural-historical theory of human cognitive development, according to which all higher mental functions emerge as a result of mastering people historically accumulated social experience (Menshikov, 2007). He identified the underlying mechanisms of this process, showed patterns of formation of scientific concepts in the process of learning and etc. and based on his cultural-historical concept, Vygotsky identified the stages of a child's mental development. He outlined the stages of a child's cognitive development. He introduced several key theoretical constructs, including the zone of proximal development and the concept of advanced learning, which have had lasting impact on contemporary educational psychology.

John Dewey, Project-Based Learning and Soviet Pedagogical Experiments

In May 1928, John Dewey travelled to the Soviet Union to study Soviet pedagogy. Earlier, the People's Commissar for Education, A. Lunacharsky, had proudly reported on the visit of one of the key teachers. In the Soviet Union, Dewey witnessed reality in all of its complexities and contradictions. He also managed notice the "secret police," the judicial investigations, arrests, deportations of NEPmen and Kulaks, and political oppositionists. He was shaken by a revolution in people's attitudes about life's necessities and possibilities, as well as a massive constructive attempt to establish a new collective consciousness. He perceived the ongoing process as a huge experiment, with still unknown outcomes, the most interesting among the processes taking place on Earth and stated - "I would rather observe its realization in Russia than in my own country." (Tavgiridze, Shervashidze, Mamuladze, & Sherozia, 2019).

In his book "Impressions of Soviet Russia and the Revolutionary World" John Dewey devoted a considerable part to the subject of education. Of course, he was shown the best educational institutions, "happy" children, democratic structures; however, he still noticed the feeble and disturbed faces of his colleagues masked beneath their convincing enthusiasm. He also noted that the demonstrated education system existed more qualitatively than quantitatively. Despite these observations, Dewey was still impressed by the achievements made during wartime, when hunger, poverty, and the progress of the system prevailed. Before departing, he dedicated a photograph of himself to Stanislav Shatsky with the inscription: *"I leave you with a strong sense of sympathy for a country that allows for such significant pedagogical effort"*. However, the mutual sympathies soon faded.

The Project Method and the Brigade-Laboratory System

As Soviet attitudes towards Western culture grew increasingly distrustful, Dewey's influence diminished. Eventually, his ideas were viewed as reactionary and incompatible with the Soviet school system. Yet, B. Komarovskiy published a book on Dewey's work, where the author directly indicated that the development of Dewey's pedagogical views could only be understood within the broader context of his unified philosophical views (Tavdgiridze, Shervashidze, Mamuladze, & Sherozia, 2019).

In 1929, the People's Commissariat for Education issued new complex-project programs (Shulgin, 1931). According to them, general educational material significantly reduced across all disciplines and while promoting the project method as a main instructional approach. The revised programs focused on so called "community service", theoretical and practical labor training.

P. Sokolov's "Monograph of Pedagogical Systems" published in Russian, dedicated an entire chapter to Dewey's pedagogical views. The author analyzes Dewey's "School and Society", characterizing the American philosopher's model as a truly self-creative and individualistic school, where children freely express their individual characteristics, where knowledge emerges from the real-life experiences and remains closely related to them, where people acquire the theory that instills in them a conscious and rational, as well as socio-philosophical relationships with their daily responsibilities and profession (Tavdgiridze, Shervashidze, Mamuladze, & Sherozia, 2019).

Small workshops and school industrial museums began to emerge around schools, where students were taught how to use simple tools. While these initiatives were useful for the process of polytechnic education, they had no connection with the methodical and firm mastery of scientific fundamentals. Instead of learning through teacher instruction and systematic assimilation of curricular content in class, students engaged primarily in hands-on assignments and projects (Pataraiia, 1931). In fact, the first stage of Soviet educational reform failed due to the decisions made by Communist Party, leading to widespread criticism in the media. As a result, the leadership of the People's Commissariat for Education of the USSR, headed by People's Commissar Lunacharsky, resigned. Around the same time the theory of "Dying (Disappearing) of the school" by Viktor Shulgin and Maria Krupenin widely spread across the Soviet Union, including in Soviet Georgia (saskolo muSaobis organizacia da meTodebi, Sulginis, Kondakovisa da Ignatievis werilebi [Organization and methods of school work, letters from Shulgin, Kondakov and Ignatiev], 1921).

Viktor Shulgin, the head the Institute of School Work Methods, focused his research on the interaction between school and the broader social environment, as well as the conditions for personality formation and value development (Shulgin, 1931). He believed that the traditional school system was dying, and its functions were being taken over by the social environment. Therefore, he argued that it was necessary to create a transitional school model, particularly, an "industrial school" and a "collective farm school". He linked education to production and turned the school into a laboratory for workforce training. Teaching at the school was based on the project method (ibid). Shulgin believed that students should learn independently. While the project method had existed for some time, in the Soviet Union it was adapted to Soviet realities. Unlike individual project work, Soviet school children completed assignments in teams, giving rise to the brigade-laboratory method was born. Shoulgin advocated for abolishing of the classroom-lesson system, replacing it with project-based learning. Instead of passively listening to teachers, students would engage in hands-on assignments, observations, and experiments – allowing them to combine theoretical and practical knowledge (saskolo muSaobis organizacia da meTodebi, Sulginis, Kondakovisa da Ignatievis werilebi [Organization and methods of school work, letters from Shulgin, Kondakov and Ignatiev], 1921).

Brigade-laboratory method was much influenced by The Dalton Plan, developed by American researcher Helen Parkhurst (Parkhurst, 1924). According to this model, students could choose the scope of their workload at the start of the academic year, individualized guidance from the teacher was provided as needed. In the laboratory class, students were given assignments on a weekly basis, with the teacher's role reduced to the level of observer and consultant. Large projects were subdivided into smaller tasks to facilitate manageability. The teacher was not required to give individual evaluation to each student's work. To enhance students' motivation, inter-brigade competitions were introduced. Academic performance of the students was regarded as the primary criterion for assessing the effectiveness of the school's administration and class teachers.

Despite its innovative approach, the brigade-laboratory method had its shortcomings, including the following:

- Material and technical difficulties.
- A lack of textbooks for students' independent work.
- Teachers' insufficient experience in managing their pupils' individual work.
- An uneven distribution of responsibilities within the team members, leading to the most active and successful students completing the majority of work.
- A narrow scope of knowledge and skills provided by Brigade-laboratory teaching model, primarily focusing on those necessary for industrial settings such as factories, collective farms and workshops.
- A negative impact on the overall academic proficiency of students.

From Pedagogical Experimentation to Ideological Standardization

In light of these issues, the Soviet government ultimately abandoned politicized Soviet pedagogical experiments. Since the 1930s, the country's political course underwent significant shift, moving towards the establishment of a totalitarian state. These transformations resulted in increased political and ideological pressure on the Soviet educational system, with pedagogy being fully subordinated to the totalitarian regime.

The 1931 Resolution and the Critique of Educational Experiments

In September 1931, the Central Committee of the Communist Party (b) issued a resolution “On Primary and Secondary Schools and the Transformation of the Content of Soviet School Work” recognizing that:

- The pedagogical experiments conducted by Soviet educators resulted in the collapse of the education system.
- The introduction of experimental methods (including labor school, complex teaching, project-based methods, brigade-laboratory approach) had left students inadequately prepared for higher education due to a lack of comprehensive general education.
- Internal political conflicts in the country hampered the effective implementation of experimental pedagogical methods.
- Disagreement among the teachers were increasingly politically driven than pedagogically motivated.
- Viktor Shulgin and Maria Krupinina were accused of destroying the school and engaging in political “left-wing deviation”.
- Polytechnic education was an integral part of communist education and had to be built on a foundation of general educational knowledge (Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Georgian SSR, 1959).

The Central Committee of the Communist Party instructed educational authorities to conduct urgent “scientific Marxist curriculum research” (Konstantinov, Medinski, & Shabae, 1964), emphasizing the need for improvement in students’ knowledge of main subjects such as native language and literature, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, geography, and history.

Starting from the 1931–1932 academic year, the People's Commissariat for Education of the Union Republics (including Georgia) developed subject-based curricula. In 1932, the brigade-laboratory method was again criticized. Teachers were required to deliver learning material regularly and to assess students’ knowledge. In the post-revolutionary period, a five-point grading system was first introduced, making the end of creative experimentation in Soviet pedagogy (Lortkipanidze, 1954).

Based on the objectives of our research, we were also examined the activities of the Scientific Council under the People's Commissariat

for Education. The Council included a pedagogical section (Gurgenidze, 1981), which played an important role in shaping the state's educational policy. The Council was responsible for approving curricula, programs, and textbooks for elementary, secondary, and higher educational institutions. It also contributed to the development of pedagogy as a science discipline, establishing its conceptual frameworks. The main focus of their work was the concept of "upbringing".

The Essence of Upbringing of a Soviet Citizen and Textbooks on pedagogy

The period between 1921 and 1932 marked a critical phase in defining and developing the essence of the upbringing of a new Soviet citizen. For the first time in history, the state ordered the mass upbringing of children, and the main role in educational policy was given to the educational process. The new Soviet political and economic order needed to be instilled in the minds of the younger generation, laying the foundation for the future development of both the Soviet school and the state.

This political approach was clearly advocated by N. Krupskaya, who claimed that "upbringing refers to a deliberate influence on adolescents with the goal of creating a special type of individual, which should be the ideological mission of the Soviet school" (Krupskaya, 1958).

Researchers such as P. Blonsky, I. Kurazov, E. Medinsky analyzed the essence of upbringing from political perspectives, viewing it as primarily an organized and planned influence on people in accordance with social development. Their concepts were analyzed by M. Krupenina in her work "Что такое воспитание?" ("What is upbringing"), in which she emphasized that "the main issue in Soviet pedagogy is the further research onto upbringing process (Krupenina, 1930).

Thus, in the 1920s and early 1930s, the degree of environmental influence, the child's real-life experience, and organized impact became the primary topics of Soviet pedagogical discourse. However, it should be mentioned that Krupenina herself viewed upbringing as a two-way process: 1. the impact of upbringing on the child driven by pedagogical objectives, determined by objective factors and environmental influences and 2. The acknowledgement of the child's own activity, as well as the formation of child's subjective position, positive guidance and responses to the teacher's purposeful educational influence. This view called for an in-depth study of the social environment in which the child

grows, considering the laws governing social cooperation between individuals” (Krupenina, 1930).

In the 1920s, textbooks by Pavel Blonsky on pedagogy gained widespread popularity in the Soviet Union. Blonsky’s “The Course of Pedagogy” first published in 1916 and 1918, and his “Pedagogy” (1923) became key references in the field.

The development of Georgian pedagogical thought in the 1920s was marked by a notable scarcity of original works in pedagogical theory. Most of the methodological works was translated from Russian into Georgian. In schools, the decisions made by the Soviet Union’s People’s Commissariat for Education were binding, and Marxist views on upbringing, alongside experimental educational ideas introduced into Russia’s educational space of at that time, were actively integrated into Georgian pedagogical thought. As noted by Basiladze and Tavdgiridze (2024), “Teaching methods were similarly adopted and implemented within Georgian pedagogical thinking” (Basiladze & Tavdgiridze, 2024).

In comparison to Soviet Russia, the introduction of “labor school” in Georgia occurred a bit later. In 1923, L. Sinitsky’s “School of Labor”, including its principles, objectives and historical ideological roots, was translated into Georgian. It discussed the principles and objectives of introducing a labor school, though such classes were largely neglected in rural schools. In the same year, a textbook of methodological recommendations titled “Teaching Methods and Programs in Adult Schools” was published in Georgian. This work released as issue No. 39 by the Main Directorate of Political Education, was intended to be a helpful guide to eliminating illiteracy within the Red Army and trade unions (Basiladze & Tavdgiridze, 2024). It is also noteworthy that original or translated literature published in the languages of the Soviet republics could not be used as the primary teaching resource. Textbooks were required to be issued in Russian, authored by Russian pedagogues. In 1924, the collection “Complex Education” was translated into Georgian, covering the educational innovations being introduced into Georgian schools at that time. The collection discussed the essence of complex teaching systems, its importance, and its methodological and general pedagogical foundations. It included articles by prominent Soviet pedagogical figures such as P. Blonsky, E. Medinsky and others on the method of complex teaching (*kompleqsuri meTodi, werilebis krebuli* [Complex Method, Collection of Letters], 1924).

As mentioned before, textbooks on pedagogy in Soviet Georgia, were mainly written in Russian, with translations into Georgian from time to time. For example, in 1926, the following pedagogical textbooks were translated and published in Georgian:

1. "Pedagogy and the Labor School" (Vol. 2) by A.P. Pinkevich. In this work, the author offers a highly positive evaluation of the labor school and labor education theories, including John Dewey's educational system. The book widely addresses the issues of teaching methods, the organization of children's collectives and various aspects of upbringing.
2. "Fundamentals of Behavior of a Preschool Child" by K. Kornilov. This work covers only the preschool period (up to 8 years old) (Basiladze & Tavdgiridze, 2024).

The subject-based teaching system was gradually being replaced with a complex teaching system. When discussing the thoughts of Hall, Dewey and others on teaching through a complex system, K. N. Sokolov noted that "we cannot teach a child chemistry as chemistry or physics as physics". He argued that children become ready to study subjects like chemistry when they observe practical processes, such as the production of bread, kvass, or the phenomena of burning and decay. According to Sokolov, the problem of the subject-based system lies in its failure to provide any natural connections between the lessons (Basiladze, Chokhanelidze, & Kostava, 2016).

The project method was introduced into teaching practice in Russia by Stanislav Shatsky in 1905. In Georgia, the interest in the project method emerged in 1926, the same year that several original books on the subject were published in Russian. Notably, "The Project Method" by American professor W. Kilpatrick, a well-known follower of the project-based teaching method, was translated. Although the essence of this method was not always understood in the same way by the proponents of the project method, there was no fundamental divergence in the core principles of the method (Basiladze & Tavdgiridze, 2024).

Interest in the project method in Georgia was revived at the end of 1928. School programs began incorporated the project method into complex system of teaching. The preface to the first program justified this change in the school system, stating: "The novelty of the program lies in the fact that it is based on a thorough study of our reality and acknowledges the direct practical engagement of schools and students in the construction of the country as the only form of educational work" (Pataria, 1931).

In 1928, the Georgian Commissariat for Education published a methodological letter titled “Methods of Work in Primary Labor Schools” as a part of the collection of works “Teacher's Companion”. It covered a wide range of teaching methods. The methodical letter supported the classification of teaching methods proposed by N. Shulman, who divided them into five main groups: 1. Oral; 2. Visual; 3. Motor; 4. Research; 5. Community work (Basiladze, Chokhnelidze, & Kostava, 2016).

The perspective of the Georgian teacher M. Orakhelashvili on the classification of teaching methods is particularly interesting. In 1927, in the “Teacher's Companion” collection, Orakhelashvili published an extensive letter titled “Methods of Work in Primary Labor Schools”. The work offers a detailed discussion on the classification of teaching methods by N. Shulman and supports his approach, while also offering an alternative classification. He divides teaching methods into five main groups and offers a critical perspective on the oral form of teaching, which he views as a characteristic feature of the feudal-era education and upbringing system, designed to raise adolescents with a patriarchal spirit. However, he accepts conversation as a valid form of the verbal method and categorizes it into three types: “1. Preliminary conversation, intended to provoke initial questions, prepare a plan and engage pupils’ attention. 2. Conversation, aimed at helping students approach the work consciously, create reasonable conditions for discussion of the work. Its purpose is the exchange of ideas, facilitate collective discussion, and agree on opinions; and 3. Conversation used for a general summary of the work (Gurgenidze, 1981).

Noteworthy contributions to the development of pedagogy and pedology in Soviet Georgia were made by: D. Uznadze, G. Devdariani, M. Orakhelashvili, G. Chumburidze, T. Beburishvili, R. Nikoladze-Poliectovisa, N. Elchaninov, G. Merkviladze, G. Gogvadze, S. Machabeli, A. Bakhtadze. However, their views on the introduction of a new methodology of learning/teaching were rejected by the authorities of Soviet Georgia, likely, under the pressure and influence of the Union authorities.

The resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (b) dated August 25, 1932, stated: “The basic form of organizing educational work in elementary and secondary schools should be a group lesson with a well-defined class schedule and presence of students. This form should include general group, team, and individual work of each student under the teacher’s guidance, using various teaching methods.

While collective forms of education should be actively promoted in all ways, no permanent or mandatory brigades should be implemented“ (Lortkipanidze, 1954). As a result, the previously mentioned teaching methods were gradually removed from the teaching process, and the pedagogical principles of M. Montessori and J. Dewey’s were largely disregarded. Unified standard curricula and textbooks were developed, and student behavior guidelines were created. The Soviet school system became completely politicized. As a result of the decree, many prominent scientists and teachers fled the Soviet Union or were arrested and repressed. Those who escaped the repressions changed their research activities and mainly published useful textbooks that emphasized pedagogy as the science of communist education for schoolchildren.

Conclusions

This article has examined the historical and social aspects of the politicization of pedagogical education in Soviet Georgia between 1921 and 1932. Based on the analysis of archival materials, government decrees, pedagogical textbooks, and scholarly literature, several major conclusions may be drawn.

First, the 1920s represented a period of intensive pedagogical experimentation throughout the Soviet Union. During this period, Soviet educators actively searched for new forms, methods, and content of education and upbringing, while pedagogical science experienced dynamic development. Various innovative educational approaches, including the labour school, complex teaching, project-based learning, and interdisciplinary instruction, were introduced and tested in educational practice.

Second, Soviet educational reforms were strongly influenced by international pedagogical thought. The educational ideas of John Dewey and other Western educators were selectively adopted and reinterpreted within the framework of Marxist-Leninist ideology. Although Soviet educational policy initially demonstrated considerable openness to pedagogical innovation, foreign educational concepts were gradually subordinated to the ideological priorities of the Soviet state.

Third, the study demonstrates that pedagogical education in Soviet Georgia became increasingly politicized during the period under review. Educational reforms sought to create a new type of citizen capable of participating in the construction of socialist society. Consequently, political education, collectivist values, and Marxist-Leninist

principles became central components of educational policy and pedagogical theory.

Fourth, pedagogical textbooks played a crucial role in the dissemination of Soviet ideology. The predominance of Russian-language textbooks throughout the Soviet republics, including Soviet Georgia, contributed to the establishment of a unified educational space and facilitated the spread of Soviet pedagogical principles. At the same time, this process limited the development of original pedagogical thought in Georgia and reinforced the dominant position of Russian pedagogical traditions within the Soviet educational system.

Finally, the transition from pedagogical experimentation to ideological standardization during the early 1930s marked a decisive turning point in Soviet education. The abandonment of experimental educational methods, the introduction of unified curricula and textbooks, and the increasing subordination of pedagogy to political objectives transformed Soviet schooling into an important instrument of ideological socialization and state control. The findings of this study demonstrate that the politicization of education profoundly shaped both pedagogical theory and educational practice in Soviet Georgia during the formative decades of Soviet rule.

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