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PETER NOIKOV¹

(1868-1921)
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Bulgaria spent almost 500 years under Turkish domination when it was liberated by Russia in 1878. Bulgarian medieval culture had reached remarkable peaks in its development but the Ottoman invasion stamped out most material and cultural values with a corresponding effect on the progress of education. This helps explain the rather late foundation of a university in Bulgaria in 1888.

Lectures in pedagogy were read from the very beginning. Pedagogy, however, was at that time geared solely at training teachers and offering students knowledge in the theory of education, didacticism and instruction methods they needed to join the teaching profession. Teaching work in general and the qualifications of the first lecturers were not conducive to expanding research and development of pedagogy's different branches. Peter Noikov's founding appointment in 1900 as associate professor in the pedagogics department at the university of Sofia was a real breakthrough, a starting-point for Bulgarian pedagogy.

The formative years

Born on 27 April 1868 in the town of Yambol, Peter Noikov was only 10 years old when Bulgaria was liberated from Turkish domination. But his memories of life under foreign oppression was to leave a lasting imprint.

Although only a child, he nevertheless worked at the Russian headquarters in his native town which facilitated his learning Russian and reading Russian writers. Once kindled, Noikov's interest in Russian literature remained strong throughout his life.

After the stabilization of the country after the war, Noikov continued his education at the secondary school at Sliven. His stay at a French boarding house in the town roused his interest in French culture. Noikov began learning French and at the age of 16 he started translating works by Emile Zola. After studying for some time in Plovdiv, he graduated from secondary school in Sofia. Due to lack of money Noikov had to interrupt his studies twice and work as a teacher in his home town and in Sofia. This, however, helped him to become familiar with teaching practices and considerably influenced his choice of profession and field of research.

Noikov's talents soon caught the attention of officials at the Ministry of Education. In 1893 he was sent to Switzerland to attend a summer course for teachers. It was there that he first touched upon the major problems of the pedagogic sciences and decided to devote his life to them. In the autumn of 1893 he enrolled as a student at Leipzig University in philosophy and pedagogy. At that time Leipzig University enjoyed worldwide prestige, with famous scholars like Wundt, Paulsen, Volkelt and Stumpf among its academic staff. Noikov attended all of their lectures.

Winning a state scholarship for Berlin University, he spent one semester there before giving up the scholarship and returning to Leipzig to attend the lectures of his favourite professors. His ambitions prompted him to write a Ph.D. thesis which he defended successfully in 1898. It analysed the active principle in Jean Jacques Rousseau's pedagogy; Volkelt was his tutor. After his return to

Bulgaria, Noikov worked for some time as a teacher in philosophic propaedeutics and German, translated Descartes' 'The Discourse on Method' from the French and studied English on his own.

Teaching activities

Joining the university as a newly elected associate professor, Noikov stood out among the rest of his colleagues with his brilliant erudition and agile mind. It was his particular concern to ensure a close link between the theoretical instruction of students and practical work at schools and to achieve this he continuously organized visits to different schools. He dreamt of setting up a model school at the university to serve as the experimental groundwork for linking theory with practice, and he founded a research laboratory in pedagogy, didactics and child psychology. Because of a lack of paid assistants but also for educational purposes, he involved many of his students in his work, assigning them the task of conducting various surveys using the methods of observation, inquiry and experiment.

The thematic range of Noikov's research was determined above all by his teaching work. Worth noting is the exceptional variety of his lectures, which covered the following areas:

- General theory of education with specialized courses on moral education for secondary-school students.
- Didactics: general theory of education, didactics of primary and secondary education.
- Instruction methods in the humanities and natural sciences, especially philosophical propaedeutics (psychology, logic, ethics), language and literature, chemistry, natural history and geography.
- History of pedagogy with specialized courses on the history of education in Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, history of new pedagogy, seminars and lectures on the pedagogic heritage of Komensky, Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Tolstoy.
- History of Bulgarian education: the first university course which systematized the Bulgarian people's main heritage in education, in its practice and theory.
- Comparative pedagogy, with a special emphasis on education in major European countries.
- School organization: historical development and modern problems of the functioning of school systems.
- Problems of school management and student self-management.
- Child psychology and specialized courses on adolescent psychology.
- Experimental pedagogy backed by methods of pedagogic research and experiments in the study process.

Noikov prepared over twenty-five lecture courses on basic subjects, plus another ten specialized extramural courses on separate problems all of which were his sole responsibility as a lecturer. In 1910 Dimitar Katsarov was appointed his assistant; he, however, specialized in experimental pedagogy and psychology only. For lack of traditions Noikov had to do his own research in order to provide the scientific backup to his university courses. That is why his scientific publications cover an extensive area of subjects and problems.

On the national principle in education

The idea of the national character of education and education systems underlied all Noikov's research. His first lecture as associate professor at the University of Sofia indicated that all his future research would be aimed at determining the general features but also the specific national traits of every education-oriented activity.³ Noikov proceeded from the assumption that the notion of education essentially consists of two component parts—universal and national, the latter being determined by every nation's real historical development:

If the educator has in mind the image of humankind, of the human being in general and endeavours to mould his disciple in this image, then we have a case of universal education. If the educator has in mind the image of the people to whom the child belongs, he strives to mould his students in that image. This is what we call national education.⁴

Teaching is always a combination of the universal and national goals of education. 'Every epoch has had its own universal human ideal and has aspired to achieve a supremacy of the universal principle at school.'⁵

Along with that, however, every nation has its own peculiarities and its unique approach to current and future tasks. Nations cannot be educated in one and the same way or have one common, immutable idea. National peculiarities acquire paramount importance in the wake of bourgeois revolutions and the growing self-awareness of nations. It is here that the idea of 'national education' emerges. 'The progress of that movement', Noikov wrote, 'is best evidenced by the epithets the school began to adorn itself with. Every nation has its own ministries of agriculture, trade, finance, defence and justice but the epithet 'national' is used for schools only.'⁶

Developing further this idea, Noikov listed the reasons that necessitated the linking of universal ideals with national specificities. These included the need to cultivate in the young a feeling of belonging to the people, of working for their prosperity and happiness; to adjust educational influences to the nation's mentality; to utilize to the full national experience which in most cases remains unknown. Most important was not to allow children to become 'aliens in their own homeland.'⁷

Noikov maintained that it was extremely important to learn from all foreign achievements in education. The results of his practical research were reflected in his publications.⁸ Mastering foreign experience should not, however, lead to underrating or ignoring local experience, Noikov claimed, because an imitation could never be as good as the original. 'We shall never make our schools like other nations' schools by imitation and plagiarism; blindly following foreign models can only lead to estranging our schools from national ideals.'⁹ He concluded that 'the roots of national education are in the people themselves'.¹⁰ The task was thus to develop further these ideas in the national system of education.

Noikov advanced the idea of the harmonious combination of universal educational values which had come down through the history and experience of all countries with the individual historical experience of every single nation.

On active education

The theory of active education occupies a central position in Noikov's pedagogical heritage. It features in almost all his publications and forms the core of his two specialized studies, 'Active Education' (1904) and The Theory of Active Education (1906). Noikov's research was generally aimed at formulating methods for a more intensive and effective education.

'Active Education'¹¹ was intended to combat the growing influence of Herbart's pedagogy in the early twentieth century which had affected both the theory and practice of education. Noikov maintained that it was necessary to encourage students' activity on an increasing scale. His views evolved with the passage of time. His Ph.D. thesis first dealt with that problem. Noikov found in Jean-Jacques Rousseau a reliable supporter in the battle against dogmatism, for freely unfolding children's creative powers.

'Active Education' is the product of extensive research and personal meditation. According to Noikov, activity was 'the salient feature of every serious educational effort; there can be no real education without it but only mechanical accumulation of knowledge, a form of taming'.¹²

To clarify fully the concept of activity, Noikov first focused his attention on its philosophical aspect. Basing his argument on Descartes, Spinoza, Kant and other philosophers, he

discovered that that concept was used mainly in two senses: metaphysical, as the effect of one psychological substance on another, and psychological, as the effect of one psychological faculty on another. According to him, both views were rather unconvincing. Noikov claimed that activity includes the three main functions of human consciousness: intellect, willpower and emotions, each of them being capable of active expression and beneficial effect on the other two. Activity is not only the result of the interaction of intellect, willpower and emotions but also the creation of new images and notions. Psychological states can be determined as passive or active depending on the involvement of existing psychological attitudes and knowledge in the formation of new images and ideas. The motives driving a person to act in one way or another at a given moment and the emotions emerging as a result of the clash of motives can be considered as the salient features of active psychological phenomena.

It is not difficult to discover in these words Wundt's influence and his theory of apperception, the role of experience, knowledge and the psychological condition of the recipient. What is new here is that Noikov stressed the possibility for channelling the apperception process; according to him, offering learners the right to choose between several motives and actions helps form new active elements, new active mental states.

The ideas advanced in 'Active Education' did not yet form a single system. So after the article appeared, the restless young man continued to explore new sides of the problem. The new results were systematized in *The Theory of Active Education*.¹³

Noikov deemed it necessary first of all to provide a definition of the concept of education. He accepted the wider view offered by Pestalozzi: Education is a wide-embracing formative process. In this sense, it includes in itself upbringing too. Active education, i.e. the personal activity of the student in the educational process, should be approached not from the point of view of external stimuli but as a characteristic of inner psychological states:

If an educator influences directly the pupils' mind, without involving any already established attitudes or knowledge (for instance by orders, or by handing out 'ready-made' knowledge) then this is an act of passive education. If the educator, however, creates the new image in the pupil's mind through his emotions and notions, this is an act of active education.¹⁴

The motives determining human behaviour are a salient feature of activity. If there is only one or several motives then their effect is one-sided. Behaviour or learning can be called active only when there are many motives and students have an opportunity to choose and learn the ones they prefer, accepting them as their own basis for judgement, as a consciously accepted behavioural regulator.

There are, of course, cases when a person, faced with the need to choose from many motives in certain conditions, remains passive. This depends on the degree and intensity of the psychological state and the struggle of motives. Sometimes, despite the existence of personal motives, attitudes and emotions, a person agrees to obey an instruction or order, though not willingly. Then the emerging unpleasant feeling of 'being wronged' is accompanied by passivity, that is, by the need to obey the order or forcibly accept ready-made solutions or conclusions.

Noikov's desire to substantiate the need of a freer expression of the child's personality is obvious. Having in mind the early twentieth-century tradition of control over children's thinking and behaviour, this desire to defend children's active attitudes is fully understandable and justified. Nevertheless, some critical notes are also necessary. There is an inclination to exaggerate theoretically the role of 'internal factors and stimuli' which are presented in conflict or even in contradiction with the 'external', active, responsible and guiding role of the teacher—of every educator. Educational work is naturally adjusted to the needs of the trainee but it also contains an important element which is outside personal needs and interests: the needs and moral requirements of society, of the organized social environment. The freedom in choosing the motives is not an abstraction but is determined by socially expedient requirements whose fulfilment is imperative. It

does not rule out freely made decisions but it does contain requirements to obey orders and instructions. As a principle of education and upbringing, activity cannot but conform to the intellectual and moral requirements valid in every society. Without observing them education may lose its role as a pedagogical process.

Nevertheless, Noikov's defence of active education deserves a fair assessment. It should be kept in mind that Herbart's pedagogical theories were reigning supreme in European schools at that time. There was a need to defend theoretically children's rights to a more active involvement in the study process, and thus also to make some changes in practical work. Noikov was guided in his work by obviously noble and humane motives.

On teachers

The theory of active education by necessity leads to the teacher figure, to teachers' training, personal qualities and pedagogical positions.

The results of educational work depend to the largest extent on the training of teachers, which guarantees their success in the process of education. A major requirement is to master thoroughly pedagogical theory and to link it with existing school practices. Breaking theory away from practice can have a negative effect on theory itself:

A professor who has not included in his course on pedagogical theory school practice is prone to abstract speculation [...] And the students attending such a course will benefit too little from it: first, because the things they will hear will not be applicable and, second, even if applicable, the theories will be easily forgotten unless illustrated in practice in schools, and will be of little importance for their future work.¹⁵

To carry out his intentions, Noikov drafted a detailed plan, guaranteeing the close link between theoretical training and school practices. According to this plan,¹⁶ two secondary schools were to open at the university, a boys' and a girls' school, where students would have their practicals. The headmaster and the teachers would all be assistant professors at the university and members of the academic seminar in pedagogy would be involved in research work. Pedagogical research laboratories would be set up at the secondary schools.

Formulated in the early twentieth century, this idea partially materialized only after Noikov's death, with the setting up in 1923 of a Training Institute at the Third Model Boys' Secondary School.

Teachers' training, in Noikov's opinion, does not end upon graduation. Teachers should be concerned with continually improving their qualifications because their authority depends on their scientific and pedagogical training. Even if highly talented, a teacher must continually enrich his or her knowledge, examine his or her achievements and assess them in a critical vein.

Of particular importance is the pedagogical postulate of love. It calls first of all for the teachers' love for their own profession. It is this love that makes them go on searching for new paths, striving to improve their qualifications. Love has another aspect too; this is the teacher's love for the students. It helps teachers be considerate, tactful and fair in their relationship with students, concerned about their progress and the formation of moral attitudes. Teachers, however, should strive to merit their students' love too, for it is of paramount importance not only for creating a quiet and pleasant emotional atmosphere but for inciting the students' interest and commitment to the subject taught by the teacher. This, in turn, is a prerequisite for better intellectual achievements.

Noikov tested his theoretical requirements in his own teaching practice. Meticulous in preparing his lessons, he showed exceptional consideration and concern for his students, setting an example of what an educator should be.

About children

To focus the students' attention on the object of education—children, Noikov formed a working group of young enthusiastic researchers at the Laboratory of Didactics and Child Psychology, with whose help he conducted a wide-embracing survey on Bulgarian schoolchildren's sexual maturation. Assistant professor Dimitar Katsarov was also involved in the work. As a result of continuous research over a decade, the study appeared in 1919.¹⁷ The book presents the survey results and reveals the orientation of scientific research, aimed at collecting more objective information about Bulgarian children in order to ensure better and more effective educational effect.

The preface defines the survey's goals: to study comparatively the physiological and psychological peculiarities of boys' and girls at the age of puberty. Comparisons are made with data and results provided by French, German, British and other authors to define the general characteristics and specific features of Bulgarian children.

Reviewing in detail the methods used hitherto, Noikov discovered that most of the authors relied on students polled to remember the symptoms of beginning puberty. However, he found that this method of collecting information lacked credibility and used only his 'method of the established case', in his own definition. This method calls for establishing the percentage of students with such symptoms without asking them any questions. Instances of false information are thus eliminated because memories cannot be trusted to be fully reliable.

Noikov's method is characterized by several elements: an equal number of boys and girls polled (forty of each sex), all Bulgarian and of equal social origin. 'We wanted them to be all city-dwellers, i.e. their parents lived in a town, they all came from the middle classes, i.e. they were neither very poor nor very rich, nor were they suffering from any disease.'¹⁸ Other aspects of the selection policy included the requirement for the children's birth date to fall in the first half of the year and the poll to take place in September and October. These strict requirements ruled out the possibility for any great deviation. But they also created certain difficulties: at a high school with 1,000 pupils only a dozen met the requirements. Still, in the interest of authenticity, the method was strictly observed, which guaranteed high-quality results.

In this study, like in all his work, Noikov proved to be an extremely exacting scholar, meticulous about the trustworthiness of results, clear in formulating the hypothesis and critical of his own achievements. The study is accompanied by a great number of tables and diagrams, meticulously calculated percentages and conscientious references to foreign literature. This study is an authentic document about the physiological development and psychological features of Bulgarian children during the second decade of the twentieth century.

Interest in pedagogical classics

Noikov had strong and lasting interests in pedagogical classics. His Ph.D. thesis showed his admiration for the prestige and views of one of the most remarkable educationists of all time, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Noikov returned to Rousseau over and over again, to draw on his works for wisdom and inspiration. Whenever he faced a difficult problem, Noikov turned to the classical pedagogical heritage. His historical research, however, always reflected a strong feeling for current values. He sought and discovered past ideas formulated by people from previous epochs that could serve human progress.

This makes his approach to historical research extremely interesting. As a rule, he endeavoured to analyse above all the conditions in which a certain educator had worked and the tasks he had set himself in clarifying the major educational problems of his time.

On different occasions he analysed the development of pedagogical theory in different societies. Ancient societies were dominated by political and religious despotism. Human activity was concentrated on the struggle against oppression. This was reflected in education too: 'There is no such freedom in the eastern societies. Science is a mystery there, accessible only to a chosen few.'¹⁹ That is why educationists who cared about human rights strove for the unfolding of the active principle in education, unleashing the energy of every child. Educators in the ancient East knew and recommended no other method of instruction but the one based on punishment and fear. The great philosopher Socrates advanced the maieutic method which is incompatible with 'fear and violence, and requires active thinking and behaviour'.²⁰

Noikov analysed in detail ideological movements and the views of humanistic educationists in particular against the backdrop of the struggle between despotism and life's call for boosting human activity and overall historical and cultural development. 'The ideal of humanistic pedagogy is no longer the single individual confined to cultural or religious activities but an individual who can display his talents in all fields.'²¹ Noikov appraised highly Mafeo Vegio's humanistic views, which, proceeding from a democratic position, sought ways and means of fully integrating children into an environment in which all people should live, cherishing optimistic ideas about life and human existence. Students' activity should be encouraged in order to ensure children's all-round physical and intellectual development. Noikov admired Montaigne who had managed to deliver 'a block on dogmatic pedagogy' and advocated insistently the new theory of active education, whose meaning lay in conscious learning, based on reasons rather than authority.

Giving full credit to the work of philosophers like Erasmus, Luther, Melanchton and Vives and to classical educationists like Herbart, Frobel and Spencer, Noikov dwelt on those ideas in their theories which had a bearing on modern times and could be used as a source of inspiration and wisdom.

Noikov devoted particular attention to the pedagogical heritage of Jan Amos Komensky (Comenius). He was well aware of the contradictions in the views of the great educationist, provoked by the vestiges of medieval thought on the one hand, and the powerful Renaissance ideas on the other. That contradiction he formulated in the following way: 'With one foot still in the religious battles of his time, he made a firm step forward with the other in the direction of pedagogical naturalism.'²²

The term 'pedagogical naturalism' is not very clear, but it is undoubtedly rooted in the idea that, by using analogies with nature, Komensky parts from conventional medieval thinking and seeks new factual and logical proofs, thus marking the beginning of a new stage in Renaissance thought and the formation of a new outlook. Stressing the progressive aspect of outlook formation, Noikov underlined Komensky's great achievements in pedagogy, including the optimistic belief in the inherent goodness of man, the need for encouraging the active involvement of children in the instruction process in order to give full vent to their abilities and potential, the emphasis on the importance of education as a pedagogical and social factor for elevating human dignity and morals. Emphasis was naturally laid on Komensky's substantiation of the need for an active expression of the human spirit, which is the salient feature of his Renaissance ideology.

The above term, though not very precise, is used by Noikov to describe Jean-Jacques Rousseau's pedagogical theories, to which he seemed to be lastingly attracted. If naturalism is identified with the realistic, sober-minded and revolutionizing ideas of the Renaissance, then, in Noikov's opinion, it acquires social significance through Rousseau's view primarily.

Rousseau's strong reaction against the violence to which children were subjected in the anti-nature schools in feudal Europe was carefully analysed. The new schools had to be freed from despotism and embrace the ideals of freedom. Noikov fully agreed with Rousseau that 'freedom and not authority is what matters most'. Noikov admired Rousseau for praising the active human spirit, for putting emphasis on acting and doing.

The abolition of feudal privileges provided possibilities for encouraging the individual activity of the widest strata of the population. In Pestalozzi's pedagogical system Noikov saw a new expression of democratic aspirations. Cherishing deep respect and admiration for his work, Noikov followed Pestalozzi's struggle for popular democratic education which ruled out violence and infringement on the child's natural development. Noikov valued most Pestalozzi's idea of inculcating in all children first 'the universal principle and on this basis cultivate habits and skills'. 'Without a universal principle the human being can only be made into a machine or a creature not much higher up the ladder than animals.'²³

Worth particular attention is Noikov's work on Tolstoy's pedagogical heritage.²⁴ He approached Tolstoy very carefully, after serious preliminary work. The detailed literary review of Tolstoy's pedagogical works includes many publications in English, German, French and Russian. The main points of Tolstoy's pedagogical system were analysed and his main pedagogical postulates about freedom, personal experience and the creative urges inherent to children described objectively and accurately. Noikov analysed in detail the ideas of the great Russian writer and his democratic positions. He was particularly inspired by Tolstoy's idea that people should be free to unfold their activity in the field of popular education and that the activity of children should be encouraged so that they might seek knowledge themselves, realizing its importance and necessity.

In all his research Noikov strictly followed the methodological requirement of analysing educationists' ideas in the light of the social and political conditions that influenced them. His approach aroused the objections of a then famous educator, Dr Zalwurk, Chief School Inspector in Karlsruhe, Germany. Zalwurk was against the interpretation of educational developments and ideas against the background of the economic, political and cultural conditions of the time. 'Nothing stable can be built upon such a foundation,' he concluded. Worried by this unjust and very severe criticism by a famous German educationist, Noikov subjected all his work to serious re-appraisal. Finally, he found no sufficient grounds to change his views. 'I have to admit', he wrote, 'that I could find no motives to make me abandon my position. On the contrary, the more I read the works of famous educationists [...] the stronger my conviction of the necessity of introducing these categories in pedagogy became'.²⁵ This position speaks volumes, not only of Noikov's self-confidence but also of the strength of his character, reflected in the firm defence of his views.

Interest in the history of education in Bulgaria

One of Noikov's greatest scientific merits is his profound research of the history of Bulgarian education. The results of his work were summarized in a two-part posthumous monograph.²⁶

Noikov's monograph was preceded by publications by other authors which, however, were of a more general, informative nature or referred to concrete events. The founder of the first new 'mutual approach' school in Bulgaria, Vassil Aprilov, published a book in 1841 designated to inform Russian readers of the historical development and current state of Bulgarian education.²⁷ Petko Slaveikov's book on the same school at Gabrovo contains more detailed historical information.²⁸ At the initiative of Ivan Shishmanov, then Chief Secretary at the Ministry of Public Education, a detailed plan for collecting material on teaching history in Bulgaria was developed in 1890. The first to summarize this material was Nikola Vankov but his work simply conformed to the requirements for a pedagogical school textbook.²⁹

Noikov's monograph is a serious scientific study based on considerable factual material. He worked on it over two decades, probing into one aspect of the problem or another. He harboured a genuine admiration for the role of education in the history of Bulgaria. Despite the extremely difficult social and political conditions Bulgarians lived under during the period of Turkish domination, they took exceptional care to keep and develop their schools. This fact filled Noikov with justifiable pride. The Bulgarians' confidence in the power of education strengthened their spirit and preserved them as a nation.

In the very first pages of the book Noikov strove to formulate the factors, determining the relatively high level of Bulgarian education throughout the ages:

Bulgarian education did not have the pillars that education in other countries is based on. No nation-state or national local administration, national church, favourable political and economic conditions, civil, church and school freedom. On the contrary, there were only persecutions of which European history seems to know nothing. These were the conditions in which Bulgarian education developed.³⁰

Noikov thought it extremely important to explain 'how the Bulgarians had managed to bring their education system on a level with other nations, when there were so few prerequisites for it. That is the most interesting thing about Bulgarian education, the only aspect of significance to pedagogy.'³¹

The theoretical and practical assets of his study lay, in his opinion, in first revealing the Bulgarian people's attitude to education and second, providing historically grounded confirmation of the power of education as a social factor in a nation's life.

Relying on facts only, Noikov studied in detail the socio-political conditions, ideological movements and the state of Bulgarian education through the centuries, presenting in an objective way both the official line and the ideas and practices of the suppressed classes, and of the Bogomil social movement in particular, whose anti-feudal struggle was waged under the banner of religious reformism. Noikov justly emphasized the role of monasteries in the process. In the existing historical conditions they ceased to function as closed establishments, where prayers for the salvation of one's soul were read, and became open educational establishments for children who would 'then return to the people' to teach and instruct them. The monasteries were essentially centres of teaching and patriotic education. For about 400 years they were beacons of education and literacy for the enslaved Bulgarian people.

The content and methods of teaching were carefully analysed. Even in the hardships of primitive teaching and the overcoming of difficulties Noikov saw a manifestation of the Bulgarians' thirst for knowledge.

Noikov analysed in detail the progress of Bulgarian education during the national revival period, putting emphasis on the two main trends: the educative and the revolutionary. He described the process of national awakening and growing self-confidence, underlain by a desire for cultural, intellectual and political independence. The people strove to improve their intellectual status in order to claim their irrevocable right to be free. Geared to meet the requirements and needs of life, the school served progress and the revolutionary struggle for liberation.

Noikov's book contains some general ideas too, including real historical facts used to reveal education's role as a spiritual unifying factor, and emphasis on education's importance for preserving and enriching cultural values needed to guarantee the all-round development of culture and the consolidation of the people's moral and political consciousness.

The pros and cons of being the first

Noikov began his work as a lecturer and researcher at a time when there were no firmly established teaching traditions in Bulgarian schools and at the university. So in the existing circumstances he had to resort to the old academic rule: in order to guarantee the success of lecturing work, it should be based on previous or parallel research work. With no lasting traditions, Noikov had to create them.

One of the advantages of being the first is that one can advance new ideas and pave new ways for research, making a contribution in every area. But there is the problem of no previous experience, of taking inevitable risks, of the impossibility of making comparisons with other research results in the same area. There is also the danger of self-complacency, of considering one's

own theories and views as unshakable, not requiring revision or change. Fortunately Noikov was demanding and critical of his own work. His research in the main pedagogic branches was serious and profound. On matters of key importance he organized special seminars with his students and then analysed and summarized the works of Komensky, Rousseau and Herbart, as well as the subjects of child psychology and the anthropometric and psychological characteristics of Bulgarian children. Seminars were also organized on teaching methods in the physical and mathematical sciences and the humanities.

There were mistakes, too, but they are unavoidable where there is insufficient experience from the past and personal experience is rather limited. The true value of a scholar and lecturer lies not in avoiding mistakes but in overcoming them, in keeping up the standards of scientific exactitude and proceeding onwards, setting new and more complicated tasks for oneself. Noikov was such a man. He was not one of those academics who could afford to read the same course of lectures over and over again. He could not specialize in only one field. His versatile interests prompted him to engage in various activities and created favourable prerequisites for him to cover with his research all basic branches of pedagogy.

It is difficult but also ennobling to be the first. Most important, however, is to be worthy of one's duty and mission in life. Noikov proved himself worthy of his noble mission, leaving a telling example for the coming generations.

Notes

1. This text was originally published in *Prospects*, vol. 20, no. 3, 1990.
2. *Zhecho Atanassov (Bulgaria)*. Professor of the History of Education at the Kliment Ohridsky University in Sofia. A researcher on the history of education adopting cultural and philosophical approaches. Among the 600 works on educational theory, textbooks, and periodical articles he has published, we may mention *A History of Moral Education* (in Bulgarian, 1986), the Preface to the Bulgarian edition of the works of J. F. Herbart (1990), and *Humanism in Education* (in Bulgarian, 1992).
3. P. Noikov, 'Universal and National Education', *Bulgarian Review*, Vol. 6, No. 6, 1900.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
6. 'The Public Schools in Britain', *School Review*, 1903; 'Trade Education in Britain', *National Economy*, 1909; 'Personal Observations in French Schools', *School Review*, 1902, and others.
7. Noikov, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
9. P. Noikov, 'Active Education', *Yearbook of the Sofia University*, 1904.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
11. P. Noikov, *The Theory of Active Education*, Kyustendil, 1906.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
13. P. Noikov, 'The Berlin State Seminar in Pedagogy for Secondary School Teachers', *School Review*, 1898, p. 1284.
14. It has unfortunately not been published. The manuscript is in the Central State History Archives (f. 1106, a. u. 1.)
15. P. Noikov and D. Katsarov. *Physiological Manifestations of the Sexual Maturation of Bulgarian School Students*, Sofia, 1919.
16. *Ibid.*
17. P. Noikov, 'Rousseau's Theories of Civil Education', *Dvadeseti vek* [Twentieth Century], 1901, p. 29.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*
21. Noikov, *The Theory of Active Education*, *op. cit.*, p. 150.
22. P. Noikov, 'L. Tolstoy's Pedagogy', *Yearbook of the Sofia University*, 1908/09.
23. Noikov, *The Theory of Active Education*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
24. P. Noikov, 'A Glimpse at the Development of Teaching in Bulgaria until the Time of Paissy', *Yearbook of the Sofia University*. 1925 (Department of History and Philology, Book 21); 'A Glimpse at the Development of

- Teaching in Bulgaria from the Time of Paissy to the End of the Nineteenth Century', *Yearbook of the Sofia University*. (Book 22.)
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