

Reflections of Formal Education in Informal Classroom Culture: The Case of Latvia (1964–2004)

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Abstract. *The article describes the reflections of formal education in informal classroom culture in Latvia in the period from 1964 to 2004. The reflections of formal education are considered within different political regimes using two stages of the political system development in the history of Latvia, i.e., starting with the authoritarian regime of the Brezhnevian Stagnation Period to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the democratic period from the restoration of independence of the Republic of Latvia up to the accession of Latvia to the European Union. This article introduces the theoretical interpretation of the concept of informal classroom culture, which provides information on the school of the past, school subjects, the class, classmates etc. up to modern times. Memory albums made by students and photographs were used as written and visual sources for the analysis performed within the research framework by aiming to answer the question of how the components of the education system (e.g., a student, a teacher, study materials and school subjects) are portrayed in the informal classroom culture sources. The research results reveal that the selected elements of formal education are directly or indirectly portrayed in informal classroom culture. Their use and presence are frequent, which substantiates the fact that formal education is a significant component of informal classroom culture.*

Keywords: *informal classroom culture, authoritarianism, democracy, memory albums, photographs.*

Introduction

People from all over the world have spent part of their lives in the classroom and each person has memories related to it (Yanes Cabrera, Meda, Viñao 2017; Herman 2010; International Symposium *School Memories: New trends in Historical Research Into Education at the International Level: Heuristic Perspectives and Methodological Issues* 2015). Memories reveal a broad range of issues, namely, the

research on the “latest” within a classroom or a school by dealing with the question of “how it was in reality.” The studies on the real state of education are closely related to the “cultural turn” in social sciences and humanities taking its roots in the 1970s (Depaepe 1996).

One of the definitions revealing the essence of school memories was found in the study titled *School Memories*. The authors reveal their dual nature within the interpre-

tation of the concept: first, they relate them to the reflections on personal experience at school, the deconstruction of “oneself”; second, they view them as a collective and public practice in recalling the common past of the school (Meda, Viñao, 2017). The studies of both individual and collective school memories provide the basis for the precise analysis of the formation and development of school and classroom culture elements and the interpretation of the transformation of these elements in the defined period of time. School memories can be viewed as one of the key sources within the research on school and classroom culture, which shed light upon not only the material reality of the school of the past, but also the emotional life. They serve as a tool for accumulating knowledge from the experience of the past and modelling the forms of school development by future teachers, in the process allowing for transformations of teaching styles based on research on the history of education (Rousmaniere 2000).

Many researchers have focused their attention on the study of concrete artifacts of classroom culture, e.g., research on school desks (Moreno Martinez 2005), textbooks (Mahamud-Angulo 2016) etc. These artifacts or components of classroom culture were introduced by the formal education system. Generally, these components are explored within the formal education context. However, as already stated, the historians of the 21st century focus their attention on the memories constructed by students and the memories that reveal their individual attitude toward the classroom processes. In other words, formal education is viewed through the prism of the individual.

The research aim is to analyze the reflection of formal education in students’ memories in the years from 1964 to 2004. The informal classroom culture created by students themselves, which sheds light upon the school of the past, school subjects, textbooks, classmates and similar elements will be analyzed. The written and visual sources used within the research framework are memory albums created by students and photographs. The sources will be analyzed through the following question posed to reach the research aim: How formal education was reflected in the informal classroom culture in the context of different state regimes? The analysis of sources is based on two political systems in the history of Latvia, namely, from the Brezhnevian Stagnation Period up to the collapse of the Soviet Union (1964-1991), and the Democratic period, starting with the the restoration of the independence of the Republic of Latvia up to Latvia becoming a member of the European Union (1991-2004).

A Theoretical Interpretation of the Concept of Informal Classroom Culture

A classroom is not only a room in a school, where curricula and syllabi are implemented, but also a social *living* organization inside a school. The same way as each organization, a classroom has its culture with certain characteristic features.

The concept of “classroom” in the Latvian language (*klase*) has long been recognized within different areas, also within the science of pedagogy; however, its interpretation in the Latvian language is ambiguous – it refers both to the room where

the study process is implemented and the study stage or cycle at school within which students acquire a certain study program. Moreover, these concepts can not be viewed in isolation – the classroom is not separable from the study stage or cycle.

Initially, the concept of “culture” has been used by anthropologists; however, since the 1970s, researchers in the field of history have started considering the concept closer. In turn, within the education sciences research, the concept has gained popularity among British and American education sociologists (Mead 1951). Despite this, the research on classroom culture has long been a “black point” within the education research – the so-called “black box of schooling” – a term coined by education sociologist Lacey (1970). In the 1980s, the first studies devoted to the concept of school culture were carried out, which are closely related to research on the concept of classroom (Erickson 1986). However, the collocation “classroom culture” was coined only in the first decade of the 21st century, when researchers (Grosvenor 1999; 2005; 2011; Lawn 1999; 2005; Rousmaniere 1999; Braster 2011; Mar del Pozo Andrés 2011) started publishing collections of scientific articles on classroom culture. Within these studies, classroom culture in formal and informal education are not differentiated between; therefore, this aspect is viewed as innovative within education research. Although the concept of “informal classroom culture” has not been sufficiently studied, the theoretical interpretation of the term “informal” stands for “not done or made according to a recognized or prescribed form; unofficial; irregular” (Oxford English dic-

tionary). Within the study, informal classroom culture is interpreted as an internal culture of a classroom beyond the formal state education system or the one imposed by a school – namely, things, emotions and values constructed by a student but not the system. The informal classroom culture also comprises the personal school memories of students.

In the 21st century, research on school memories has been conducted within historiography by focusing on the memories of the individual actors of school life (school diaries, autobiographies, oral evidence etc.) and “informative objects” within empiric school culture – namely, material objects found in a classroom and a school, e.g., a school desk, a board, posters etc. These sources are used to collect more non-standardized information, which was not created based on school regulations or education theories (Yanes Cabrera, Meda, Viñao 2017).

Both formal and informal classroom cultures comprise numerous interrelated elements, located within the framework of a formal education system. Kestere (2015) distinguishes among the five categories of classroom culture elements and this categorization was applied to differentiate between both formal and informal classroom culture elements (Table No. 1). The main criterion for differentiating among informal classroom elements was the indicator of the element, i.e., the official education system or students. The elements created by students form the informal classroom culture.

Based on the categorization, the elements of classroom culture may be initiated by classroom actors; they take the form of organized or random events, artifacts,

Table No. 1. *Formal and informal classroom culture elements*

Categorization of classroom culture elements based on Kestere (2015)	Examples of formal classroom culture elements	Examples of informal classroom culture elements
1) Images, social roles and actors;	1) The teacher as an employee within the education system, the student as a consumer within the education system;	1) Teacher as a person, students as children/teenagers;
2) Daily habits and rituals;	2) Study process during the class;	2) Students' activities/behavior during the breaks, activities after lessons at school or together with classmates, out of classroom/school activities together with classmates;
3) Cultural artifacts, symbols, icons;	3) Textbooks, workbooks, religious and political symbols, posters, teacher's and students' desks;	3) Memos, memory albums, wall tablets made by students, questionnaires, photographs taken by students;
4) Traditions and micro-events;	4) Excursion plan/route, graduation script;	4) Emotions and experience gained during excursions, emotions and experience gained during graduation, visiting classmates/ teachers, school parties;
5) Language.	5) Teachers' language delivering the subject, students' language while learning.	5) Teachers' and students' language used beyond the study process, expressions, jargon, nicknames.

rituals etc. Their formation, maintenance, development and implementation are not based on the official education system and study standards.

Research Sources Within Informal Classroom Culture

Kestere (2015) defines numerous historical sources for classroom culture research: classroom design, written sources (documents, study materials, statistics, pedagogical print media), material objects in the classroom (desks, the board, wall decorations, schoolbags, notebooks, stationary, students' and teachers' clothes, school uniforms), visual sources (photographs,

students' drawings, pictures in textbooks, posters, films, TV series), memories, memoirs.

This categorization of historical sources on classroom culture can be adjusted for research on informal classroom culture. To exemplify, curricula, syllabi, school regulations, textbooks and others are developed or introduced by the state or education sector employees, and these make up the formal classroom culture. Photographs taken by students, memos, memory albums, drawings in notebooks, private diaries and similar of the sort make up the informal classroom culture.

Written sources within classroom culture research comprise documents, study

materials, publications and manuscripts, the same as within any research in the history of education (Kestere 2005). The historical sources on informal classroom culture are found within the manuscripts category. One of the sources within this category is memory albums or memory notebooks, filled questionnaires (comprising questions posed by students aimed at classmates), memos and other written sources that form individual school memory.

Within this category, memory albums are assigned a special place to, as this is the product created by students. These types of sources provide thorough information (poems, drawings, student writing, photographs, stickers etc.). These are the records in albums or notebooks aiming to leave some memory about oneself for classmates. Such records are not framed by any limitations posed by the education system or school regulations. Researchers in different scientific and scholarly fields have focused their attention on memory albums. Spanish education historians have analyzed the structure of memory and annual books, and their development in Spanish religious schools in the 20th century (Dávila, Naya, Zabaleta 2017). While in Latvia, Baiba Krogzeme-Mosgorda (2013) has devoted her doctoral thesis in folklore studies by the exploration of tradition of memory albums in the social and cultural context of Latvia.

Finnish historian Jussi Pekka Nuorteva (1983) dates the memory album tradition back to the 1540s. He states that this tradition originated in Germany and gained popularity at Wittenberg University in around 1540. Memory albums have rapidly spread both socially and geographically. An album aimed at a friend to sign and a poetry line

to share was familiar among craftsmen and clerics, military and courtiers; however, it was most highly appreciated by students travelling from one university to another.

The Latvian society was familiarized with memory albums in the second half of the 19th century, when education opportunities were granted to more youths (including girls). The design of the oldest Latvian albums comprising the German, or localized from German texts found in it, confirm that the album tradition in Latvia has taken its roots in German girls' schools and rapidly spread among Latvian students (Krogzeme-Mosgorda 2013).

In Latvia, during the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries, memory books and the questionnaire notebooks also known as memory notebooks were most widely spread. The key difference between these two types of sources is that, within the framework of questionnaire notebooks, the author posed specific questions and frequently also tasks for the addressee to complete. Memory books did not have any limitations – the key objective for the addressee was to leave some memory about himself/herself for the owner of the memory book. In general, all the memory albums have one common feature – they are designed as a collection of records produced by other persons (friends, relatives, school friends etc.) dedicated to one particular person (Krogzeme-Mosgorda 2013).

The importance of visual sources within pedagogy and education research is highlighted by the researcher affiliated to the University of Catalonia, Eulàlia Collell-demont (2015), who states that “education history has mainly been written from the

textual perspective. Documents, memories, diaries, books have been the main source [...]. But the reality is much more complicated. [...] visual sources for us are the way to find a new approach to the past.”

Within classroom reality research, photographs are also assigned an important place to (Braster 2011; Grosvenor 1999). These are the photographs which form an important category, displaying vital information on the reality of the respective era, on the processes under exploration in their real context, but not just a vague theoretical interpretation. However, it should also be stated that an in-depth analysis of a photograph should be based on the thorough understanding of the historical context within which the photograph was produced. A photograph is of true value as it confirms the reality, it is an eyewitness of the event and it has the status of a document (Grosvenor, 1999).

The analysis of photographs in the context of informal classroom research should be based on the prerequisite that the photographs should not be related to the regulations or requirements posed by the education system. Therefore, for the analysis, the photographs taken by students, teachers or parents independently from the education system or school order should be used.

The Historical Context

The starting point for the research is the Brezhnevian Stagnation Period. Leonid Brezhnev, the General Secretary of the Central Committee (CC) of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), was presiding over the country from 1964 until 1982. The Brezhnevian Era is viewed as particularly significant in the research on

the history of classroom culture in the Soviet Union, as the ruling parties focused their attention on the education of the new generation of young communists. During this period, the political impact on classroom culture is direct and visible, affecting the classroom culture through limiting access to information, application of propaganda and censorship. This led to the ideological consensus as well as changes in the regulations including the area of education.

As compared to Stalinism, the Soviet regime, since the 1960s, has become more liberal and the form of government in the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics has become more similar to authoritarianism than totalitarianism. Starting with the Brezhnevian Period, education in Latvia has changed into “incomplete secondary education” (basic education comprising 8 study years). At the same time, more students started completing the full secondary education program, while discarding the professional/vocational education. Basic education (“incomplete secondary education”) and, since the 1970s, also secondary education have become obligatory (Bleiere et al. 2005).

Mikhail Gorbachev, having been General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union since 1985, has implemented major changes, also starting the initiative toward the democratization of the Soviet Union by implementing the politics of openness (*Glasnost*) and restructuring (*Perestroika*). The state politics and democratization of the society were reflected in the daily life of schools, leading to reduced censorship both as applied to the study contents and out of school information space. This led to the democratization

of the school internal regulations, e.g., as concerns school clothes, accessories and similar issues. Gorbachov politics resulted in the collapse of the Soviet Union and the restoration of Democracy in Latvia.

The period from the restoration of independence of the Republic of Latvia in 1991 until Latvia becoming a member of the European Union in 2004 is crucial for classroom culture research to understand the reality Latvia had to face, as the time for building the democratic school implementing democratic teaching and learning methods has come. Education had to go hand in hand with Latvia on her way back to Europe, as it had to integrate into the spiritual and intellectual movement of the European nation (Kestere 2010). Furthermore, the diversification and differentiation of education were initiated; the humanistic direction was introduced for education; the organization and methodologies within a classroom and out of class activities underwent changes directed toward the development of personal activity and independence; the contents of education, the forms of education organization and management were modernized; new technical tools were introduced (computerization etc.); experimental activities within new education design and assessment were implemented (Anspaks 2003).

Research Methodology for the Reconstruction of Informal Classroom Culture

Within the research on informal classroom culture, historical sources developed in relation to the students, teachers, parents' activities beyond the formal education system can be used (e.g., memos, narratives on the

activities during the breaks, personal diaries revealing classroom life, photographs taken by students during excursions etc.). Within the present research framework, two types of historical sources – memory albums developed by students (memory books and questionnaires) and photographs taken by students, teachers and parents outside the formal education framework were used. Hermeneutics were applied as a method for the analysis of interpreting the data within the historical, political and sociocultural context of the respective period.

Within the research framework, 19 memory albums were explored. Eight of the sources under analysis were produced during the Soviet regime in Latvia and eleven memory albums were produced in the period from the restoration of independence of the Republic of Latvia in 1991 up to its accession to the EU in 2004. All the memory albums belong to private collections. Memory albums can be viewed as a rare source, generally found in private collections. Therefore, no criteria were applied in the process of source selection besides the chronological framework. Memory albums originate from different regions of Latvia representing notes by students from both rural and urban areas. The students' age is also ranging from primary to secondary education students.

The research sample comprises 24 photographs found in Latvia State Archive of Audiovisual Documents, the photo archives uploaded in the homepages of Latvian schools as well as private collections.

The main criterion for photograph selection was the fact that the photograph was taken outside the formal education framework.

The synthesis of the results obtained from the analysis of memory albums and photographs may lead to the significant conclusions on the importance of formal education within informal classroom culture shaped by political regimes. It should be highlighted that widening the research sample will enrich the conclusions.

Based on the theoretical analysis, the elements of formal education were stated to identify their reflections in informal classroom culture. These elements were selected in accordance with the terms used in the Latvian Education Law (Latvijas Republikas Izglītības likums 1998). The following five elements were selected: educational institution (school), learner (student), study tools, school subject, educator (teacher). These elements of formal education were studied within the informal classroom culture posing the following seven questions: 1) How do sources on informal classroom culture portray school? 2) How do sources on informal classroom culture portray students? 3) How do students portray themselves and their classmates in the sources on informal classroom culture? 4) How are study tools portrayed in the sources on informal classroom culture? 5) How are school subjects portrayed in the sources on informal classroom culture? 6) How are teachers portrayed in the sources on informal classroom culture? 7) How do teachers portray themselves in the sources on informal classroom culture?

Formal Education Portrayal in Memory Albums and Photographs

All the memory albums (personal questionnaires, memory notebooks – often used interchangeably) have one common

feature – they are designed as a collection of records written by other persons (friends, relatives, school friends etc.) dedicated to one particular person. In the majority of cases, the records are produced by the owners' former classmates. However, parents and relatives are also frequent entry producers. Moreover, they frequently become the authors of the first records in the memory album. Within the memory notebooks belonging to both periods under investigation, teachers' records are found – in the majority of the cases, these records, in the form of wishes for the owner, are produced by a class tutor or teachers working in the after class activities sector. Based on the fact that the majority of record producers are school and classmates, memory wishes frequently portray the school life – the study process, classroom life, students' relationships.

In the memory albums belonging to the Soviet period, drawings and flowers scissored out from postcards are used as illustrations. Animals and cartoon characters, copied from books for children or textbooks, are of highest topicality. Within the more recent memory albums produced in the first years of the 21st century, stickers displaying foreign or local celebrities (singers, actors) or cartoon characters are used as illustrations. Within these sources, animals are not popular anymore; they are replaced by stick figures. The drawings of the “technical nature” also gain popularity (e.g., computer).

In the 1970-80s, the majority of photographs were produced responding to the order from either the school or the education system. In the majority of cases, the photographs produced during this period

were the result of the photography club activities and students mainly experimented with light, shadows and imaging. On the contrary, the photographs produced in the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century are the products of the independent activities of students, teachers and parents and they can be grouped into three categories: 1) Spending free time during the breaks or after classes; 2) Presentations of the independent or group work in the classroom; 3) Staging the performance for parents in the framework of festive events (e.g., a Christmas party).

The School. Memory albums or photographs are not visible within any concrete educational institution. However, within these sources, the word “school” is frequently used, which is generalized and, in the majority of cases, refers to “the place where students learn.” The specific focus on schooling, the significance of school as a meeting place and importance to achieve good results in the study process were particularly crucial during the Soviet period. Many records encourage to glorify and appreciate the school years, as one is going to long for this time later on – as stated in a poetic passage, “the passed school years will remain in the memories forever.” In the memory albums of the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century, the records mentioning school are very rare – only some pictures display children with schoolbags heading to school.

The photographs do not display any particular school, but children are displayed in the school premises – during breaks or after classes, which confirms that taking photographs is not part of the study process (Figure No. 1). However, based

on the analysis, the conclusion can be drawn that school is viewed as inseparable from learning. The photographs taken after classes also display students posing together with or without teachers, or performing a play during an event, for example, a Christmas party.



Figure No. 1. Students in the classroom during a lesson break (Riga, 1985)

Student. Within the memory albums, the image of a student is most frequent. The student is portrayed both in poetry and illustrations – mainly in the drawings. Close ties with the school, classmates and relationships among classmates/friends are one of the key themes. However, the significant differences are found by comparing the memory albums produced in different historical periods. The albums produced in the 1960-80s provide evidence on the significance of the sense of belonging to a specific group/classroom. In describing a group/classroom, students write that their group/classroom is “cool” despite the fact that it may be noisy or rude, and they are always missing it and do not want to be separated with it.

Boys and girls in the Soviet period have a similar approach to producing records – all of them put much effort into making

the entries neat and tidy, also incorporating beautiful illustrations or drawings (Figure No. 2). Both in the records of girls and boys, children are portrayed as good-looking, healthy, having ruddy cheeks. The only difference is that boys are posing their opinion more directly. The Soviet youth were educated within the Collectivism and Equality ideology – a person is a “citizen” or “member” in the first place, but not a “man” or a “woman.” This might be the reason why the records of girls and boys of the Soviet period do not have any significant differences.



Figure No. 2. The first page of a memory book (Dundaga, 1984)

During the period of the restoration of democracy, a person’s individuality and personality, as well as the freedom of word and expression, were appreciated. This is also visible in the records found in memory albums. In the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries, illustrations made by girls do not reveal any

significant differences if compared to the Soviet period. The issue of neatness and tidiness is more topical for girls, parents and teachers, but boys use stickers and humorous stick figures, write poetry of impolite nature content-wise, satirical rhymes or jokes. Boys frequently use images of hooligans, sometimes even having a cigarette in their mouth or rude messages on their clothes (frequently in the English language) (Figure No. 3).



Figure No. 3. Boy-made record in memory book (Jelgava, 2000)

The illustrations in memory albums provide evidence also on students’ self-presentation – they are portrayed the way they want to be seen. Representing themselves, they attempt to portray themselves as someone close, in their opinion, to being better. Therefore, the emphasis placed

on neatness, correctness and order visible in the Soviet records shows that both girls and boys represent themselves this way. This may be rooted in the implementation of a specific curriculum highlighting the importance of neat and tidy writing during the Soviet period. During the democracy restoration stage, very limited place was assigned to neat writing within the curriculum. Within the memory albums, boys and, in many cases, girls pay less attention to it, instead focusing on being or seeming to be “stylish.” Therefore, based on the analysis, the conclusion can be drawn that the change of political regimes impacts the change of students’ viewpoints on what is good, beautiful and correct.

Students’ wishes for each other are mainly related to success, health, happiness and love in their further life. The whole research sample contains motivating slogans encouraging to be positive and successful, work and study, in order that one’s dreams could come true and the addressee would become a good person. For example, we have *ja gribi tikt pie mērķa galā, tad neapstājies ceļa malā* (“if you want to reach your aim, don’t just stop on the roadside”) and *lai ir grūti, vajag spēt, stirpam būt – uzvarēt* (“despite difficulties, be capable, be strong and win”). However, the analysis shows that the records of the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries quote poetry on rare cases in comparison to the records of the Soviet period.

The analysis revealed the importance of appreciation displayed by others toward the addressee, as alongside with questions on the date of birthday, favourite colors, books, singers etc. The following ques-

tions of assessment, among others, are posed:

1. “Evaluate me based on the 10 point scale.”
2. “Which classmate do you like/dislike?”
3. “Who is the coolest in the class?”
4. “Who is the person you hate?”

In the majority of cases, classmates point to one and the same people, which substantiates the presence of leadership in the classroom and, as within any social organization, a certain hierarchy, formed by students on a principle known solely by them. In assessing the owners of these memory albums, girls are usually more open and polite – they state such features as kind-hearted, cool, nice, sweet, friendly, beautiful and smart. In turn, boys use such words as “normal” and “cool.”



Figure No. 4. *Students posing for their teacher (Ozolnieki, 2002)*

The analysis of the photographs revealed significant differences based on the context of taking photographs. During the breaks, the student accompanied by others is more smiling, free, joyful, frequently also impolite, e.g., showing the tongue (Figure No. 4).

The shift from an authoritarian toward a democratic regime is clearly visible in the memory albums of 1990–1991, which contain poetry by solely Latvian authors and different national symbols. One of the questions posed in the memory album of the years 1990–1991 is “what, in your opinion, Latvia will be like after the year 2000?” This provides evidence to the idea that nationalism and patriotism have started dominating also within the informal classroom culture and students show their appreciation toward the national symbols and Latvian literary heritage in their records, too.

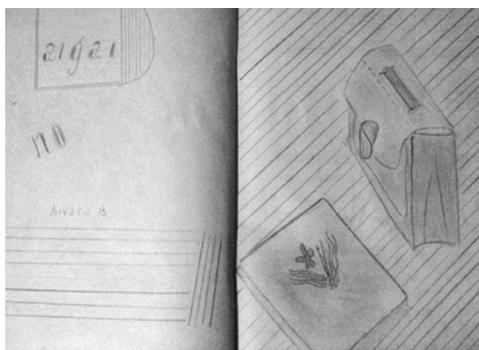


Figure No. 5. *Record in a memory book (Riga, 1974)*

Study Tools. Concrete study tools are not portrayed to a sufficient extent in the memory albums. Some illustrations introduce textbooks, the school or a school-bag (Figure No. 5). However, the use of study tools in producing memory albums is implicitly stated. Students frequently use illustrations copied from textbooks or school notebooks as well as quotes from poetry, rhymes, folk songs introduced in textbooks. This trend is mainly characteristic to the memory albums of the Soviet period, containing copied animals, people

and other images. After the restoration of independence and the democratization of the study process, students rarely use copied images, but mostly produce their own drawings as well as used support materials – stickers, stamps, images from magazines, photographs (Figure No. 6).

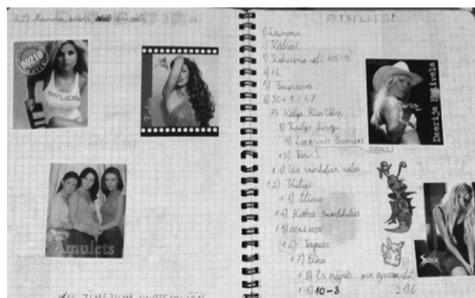


Figure No. 6. *A record in a questionnaire (Jelgava, 2001)*

This provides evidence to the accessibility of such materials, rooted in both technology development and democratization in general. Before the collapse of the Soviet regime, magazines displaying celebrities of the Western world were not accessible for students. The impact of Western culture is clearly visible in the album of 1998 that contains a record illustrated by the advertisement produced by the fast-food restaurant McDonalds.

In turn, the analysis of the photographs does not provide the opportunity to gain insight into the contents of textbooks. Still, it allows for diagnosing its essence. Due to technological developments, the availability and variety of textbooks is more visible in the photographs of the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries. The photographs display textbooks, notebooks, folders and pencil-cases on school desks. After the restoration of independ-

ence of the Republic of Latvia, the photographs display also TV-sets, projectors or computers (Figure No. 7). However, none of the photographs explored are devoted specifically to textbooks.



Figure No. 7. A classroom with a technology set (Jelgava, 2004)

The School Subject. One of the formal education elements is a school subject. The school subject most frequently mentioned in the memory albums is mathematics. It is portrayed both within poetry and illustrations. Within rhymes and poems, it is presented as a difficult school subject resulting in the necessity to stay at school after classes, as students have difficulties with multiplication. The poems having similar content are present in many albums both belonging to the Soviet period and the period after the restoration of independence of the Republic of Latvia. The illustrations also contain mathematical samples or geometrical figures. Poems dealing with students running away from lessons or falling asleep during the lesson, such activities being immediately condemned, are also present. In general, records pose the opinion that such actions and bad learning outcomes may lead to major difficulties in

life. The analysis of the memory albums revealed that this trend remains stable in all the records belonging to different time periods.

A topical question in the memory albums is aimed at collecting opinions on the best and worst school subject. Regardless of the production period, students mark PE and music as their favorite lessons, adding computer science to their list in the 21st century. In turn, the school subject of least popularity is mathematics. It is noteworthy that Soviet students also frequently mention the English language as the worst school subject.

From the 1990s up to the beginning of the 21st century, records of religious nature are found – “Let God save you,” “read the Bible” and “grow in faith.” This trend may be related to the introduction of religious studies within the curriculum of the Latvian schools in the 1990s.

The Teacher. The image of the teacher is not present in the album illustrations. However, teachers are portrayed in poems of the Soviet period, for instance, poetry on harsh teachers pressing to stay after classes. In turn, within the sources, two types of questions related to the image of the teacher were identified: first, the question about the favorite teacher; and, second, the question aimed at assessing the class tutor. The essence of a favorite teacher cannot be easily linked to concrete school subjects, as the albums originated in different places, schools and historical periods. However, the answers of the representatives of one classroom group are frequently the same, which confirms the idea that the students have a common opinion on the best/worst teacher. In turn, the assessment of the class

tutor is usually either neutral or positive; therefore, it is likely that such questions were included in case if the students' attitude toward the class tutor were positive.

Starting with the 1990s, these albums contain the questions related to the choice of a future profession. Such questions were not posed prior to this period. This fact substantiates the conclusion that in the Soviet period, the question on future career opportunities was of less topicality, which was rooted in the political implementation of the Soviet regime – the main goal was to serve the interests of the society. On the contrary, within the democratic period, the new generation is taught already during the school years that a person is an individual who has an opportunity to reach all set goals. Furthermore, the albums produced during the primary and basic education cycles reveal that many students are eager to become teachers – these are girls in all the albums under investigation. Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn that, based on the opinion of students of the 1990s, teaching is a female profession.

The memory albums do not contain many records written by teachers; however, some are present starting with the 1980s. Teachers produce neat and tidy records; they do not illustrate their records but mostly focus on the contents of the entry. The majority of records contain motivating or educating poems that focus on the importance of wisdom and knowledge, for instance, in the album dated with the year 2004, a teacher stated: “The brain cannot be bought, but it can always be developed!” Many teachers' records contain nice and sweet words about the student. Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn

that also in the memory records, teachers portray themselves as teachers – avoiding redundant or striking illustrations but promoting educational and valuable ideas.

An analysis of photographs revealed the teacher as a conservative person, usually in the background of a photograph, posing together with students during the lesson breaks (Figure No. 8) or standing beside them during a Christmas play or a presentation of homework.



Figure No. 8. Teacher posing with students during the lesson break (Ozolnieki, 2003)

Conclusions

The analysis of the historical sources on informal classroom culture (memory albums and photographs) revealed that the selected elements of formal education are directly or indirectly portrayed in informal classroom culture. Their use and presence are frequent, which substantiates the fact that formal education is a significant component of informal classroom culture.

The student as an element of formal education in informal classroom culture, reflects the dynamics of political regime transformation (including education policies) through his/her personal features and visual image. Producing records in memo-

ry albums, the Soviet student emphasizes neatness, correctness and order, while students of later time periods are becoming more careless, all the while presenting themselves as “stylish” but not orderly. These facts confirm the change of values within the society portrayed in the school culture, including also the formal culture – curricula and syllabi. The Soviet regime promoted the youth education program incorporating collectivism, social utility, leveling and disciplining principles, while the democracy restoration stage encouraged people to appreciate personal individuality, the freedom of word and expression.

During Soviet rule, the students, the same as any other resident of the Soviet Union, were “citizens” or “members” in the first place. Possibly this is the reason why the students’ records in memory albums belonging to this period do not have any significant differences as concerns their neatness and orderly organization. During this period, education both at home and at school is based on strict control and discipline, which leads to the formation of a common or similar perception of the good and beautiful, as well as common opinions and values at large. However, during the democracy restoration stage, individuality is accentuated in the society, which leads to a significant diversity of viewpoints in records. The records’ visual organization features individuality and significantly differs as concerns entries of both girls and boys.

The analysis of the sources revealed the changes in students’ handwriting and the techniques applied to layouting records. This may be rooted in the development of technologies, for instance, the development of computer and other infor-

mation technologies. However, it may also be related to the transformations within the curricula, for instance, the exception of calligraphy from the study programs.

The analysis of the sources also revealed that the paradigms developed during the authoritarian regime have been rooted in the students’ consciousness and are visible also beyond the formal education context, e.g., records in memory albums are produced with the aim to portray oneself (neat handwriting, correct layout etc.). On the contrary, during the democracy restoration stage, the state regime is not directed toward total control anymore; therefore, students are not diligent. There is no accountability on the integration into the masses, there is no need to be a “screw” in the system, but just the opposite – individuality should be presented.

During the democratic restoration period, in producing the records in memory albums, the contents of the records are not given much attention to (e.g., they do not use quotes from poems). Students mainly focus on the visual layout using different stickers, images from magazines and advertisements. This may be explained by the accessibility of the stickers produced by the industry as well as youth pop-culture magazines. Another reason may be rooted in the changes in opinions and values. The formal education is not frequently present within the contents of these records.

Education institutions or the schools are comparatively rare in memory albums; however, the memos devoted to it promote appreciation toward the school and respect towards the time spent in the school walls. The school is identified as a symbolic homeplace within the memories of youth,

combining the elements of both formal and informal classroom culture.

The teacher, as an element of formal education in the sources on informal classroom culture, was revealed as a conservative image functioning within specified borders and motivating students to study and develop both mind and soul. The notes within memory albums reveal the class tutor as a particularly significant element of informal classroom culture.

The research of the sources on informal classroom culture also revealed transformations in the education system and the standards for syllabi, e.g., the introduction of religious studies and the importance of

patriotic education in the 1990s, difficulties in the English language acquisition during the Soviet period etc.

Based on the analysis of the memory albums and photographs, a conclusion can be drawn that formal and informal classroom cultures are not separable. Formal education is a significant component of informal classroom culture. Within the informal classroom culture, it is portrayed through students' individual focus, by an application of visual tools. The visual and material image of the formal classroom culture formed by students' memories is a crucial and innovative tool within research in the history of education.

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FORMALĀUS UGDYMO ATSPINDŽIAI INFORMALIOJE KLASĒS KULTŪROJE: LATVIJOS ATVEJIS (1964–2004)

Kitija Valeina

S a n t r a u k a

Šīame straipnyje siekiama aprašyti formalaus ugdymo apraiškas informāloje klasēs kultūroje Latvijos kontekste. Formalaus ugdymo apraiškū analizē fokusuoja ī laikotarpi nuo 1964 iki 2004 metų ir apima du skirtingus Latvijos politinio režimo etapus: autoritarinī nuo Brežnevo stagnācijas iki Sovietū sajungos žlugimo, ir demokratinī nuo Nepriklausomybės atgavimo iki Latvijos īstojimo ī Europos Sajungā. Straipsnio teorinėje dalyje pristatomas informālios klasēs kultūros konceptas, apimantis mokyklos praities, ugdymo turinio, klasēs, klasiokū ir kitus aspektus. Formalaus ugdymo apraiškos informāloje klasēs kultūroje atskleidžiamos analizuojant mokiniū sukurtus atminimo albumus ir mokyklū fotografijas. Anali-

zės metu siekiama atsakyti ī klausimā, kaip skirtingi ugdymo sistemos komponentai (mokinys, mokytojas, mokymo medžiaga ir ugdymo turinys) yra vaizduojami informālios klasēs kultūros šaltiniuose. Mokiniū atminimo albumū ir fotografijū analizē parodo, kad skirtingi formalaus ugdymo komponentai yra tiesiogiai arba netiesiogiai vaizduojami informālios klasēs kultūroje. Formalaus ugdymo minėjimas ir vaizdavimas informālios klasēs kultūros šaltiniuose yra dažnas, o tai leidžia teigti, kad formalus ugdymas yra reikšmingas informālios klasēs kultūros elementas.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: informali klasēs kultūra, autoritarizmas, demokratija, atminimo albumai, fotografijos

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