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How ideology affected education in the German Democratic Republic 1945-1959

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Ideologies exist in all societies. They influence for example politics, economics and also education. Ideology or ideologies are detectable in all parts of education such as curriculum, textbooks and teacher education. Therefore, education is not neutral.

As an example of the ideology of the society affecting education, I will be looking at the German Democratic Republic's education system in the years 1945-1959. In my thesis I will show how the Soviet Union imposed its Marxist-Leninist ideology into the education system after the denazification of it as a consequence of the Second world war.

The relevance of ideologies has not disappeared. They still have an influence in societies. By inspecting ideologies, we can better understand their influence in today's world. Through understanding, we can aim to contradict the current ideologies and aim to change their influence on the different aspects of the society.

Key words: ideology, German Democratic Republic, education system, Marxism-Leninism

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1. Introduction

“Education is a weapon, and its effect depends on who holds it in his hands and at whom it is aimed.” Joseph Stalin (Rodden, 2002, 34)

Ideology is used to justify political and social action (Zajda & Zajda, 2012) including education. Acknowledging ideology’s effect on education is necessary if students are wanted to become critical thinkers. As an example of the ideology and the values of the society affecting the curriculum and education in general, I will be inspecting the education system of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) since it is a good example of how education and ideology interact with each other (Rodden, 2002). Over the 40 years of its existence the curriculum and school system of the GDR changed to meet the needs of the society at that moment. The changes were sometimes quite rapid such as the reconstruction of the school system according to the communist beliefs in East Germany but even more according to the idea of denazification of all of Germany after the Second World War (Rodden, 2002). As Germany had before been a Nazi state under Adolf Hitler’s government, Germany now needed to adapt to the ideologies of its occupiers: the United States of America, the Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union.

The shift after the Second World War was not the first time that Germany went through severe changes in its ideology. It had already been done two times before in the 20th century (Rodden, 2010). The first shift of the 20th century happened after the First World War (Rodden, 2010). After Germany lost the war, the monarchy was abolished and a more democratic Weimar Republic was founded (Rodden, 2010). The second shift happened in the 1930s with the rise of Nazism (Rodden, 2010). The shift was the result of Adolf Hitler’s and his party’s rise to power (Rodden, 2010). Through this change in regime, antisemitic ideas were adopted and the Nazi ideology as a whole was seen as the one true ideology (Rodden, 2010). The third shift in ideology was the before mentioned division of Germany into occupation zones after the Second World War (Rodden, 2010). This was not the last change Germany went through in the 20th century (Rodden, 2010). The last change in ideology in the 20th century in Germany happened during the reunification of the two Germanies in 1990 (Rodden, 2010). I chose to inspect the shift after the Second World War, because then Germany went from being an authoritarian

nation governed by the ideology of national socialism to being a nation governed by the ideology of communism. The authoritarian nature of governing stayed but the ideological underpinnings changed.

The time period that I have chosen to inspect is from the end of the Second World War in 1945 until 1959, when the reform from an eight year comprehensive school system to a ten year comprehensive school system happened. I have chosen this time period as I see that the ideological shift after the war was quite radical, and therefore the inspection of the ideology and its effects can show how the ideological shift truly changed East Germany and its education system. Even though there were some ideological changes during the existence of the GDR, such as the abandonment of personalized cult in the first years of the post-wall East Germany, which lead to the selection of Erich Honecker over the former leader Walter Ulbricht (Rodden, 2002), it can be argued that the most prominent changes in ideology were in the early and late years of the GDR's existence as a country.

The first change that East Germany faced after the Second World War was the becoming of a Soviet occupation zone in 1945 and sovietization of the nation after it. The second radical shift was the reunification of West and East Germany in 1990. These changes affected all aspects of the lives of the people living in East Germany and were therefore significant in their lives. In my thesis I will examine how the ideology affected four different aspects of the education system of the GDR in the years 1945-1959: curriculum, teacher education, textbooks and hate education. I will start by discussing ideology as a concept in general and in educational settings in the next section. After this I will continue with an overall history view of the GDR and its educational beginnings in the 1940s to construct the context in which the education system existed. Lastly, I will inspect the different aspects of the education system of the GDR to determine how the communist ideology affected them.

2. Ideology

There is no society without ideologies. Ideology is used to justify political and social action (Zajda & Zajda, 2012), and it affects all countries in the world. Therefore, the historical context in which the education takes place is important as it reveals the underlying values and wants that the society has for all of its different for example education. The reforms in the system can show how education was shaped to meet the needs of the society (Porges & Watts, 2018). Especially as the historical context and in it the values and ideologies of the society in the GDR has a great meaning to the formulation of the education system (Bruen, 2014), discussing the historical framework is necessary. Therefore, the theoretical framework includes in addition to the inspection of the education system of the GDR, a historical framework of the society of the GDR. But firstly, I will discuss ideology as a concept in general.

2.1 What is ideology?

The description of ideology as a concept can be quite difficult (Apple, 2019; Hamilton, 1987; Schull, 1992). Hamilton (1987) identified 27 different elements to define ideology. Some of these elements include that ideology is “associated with the whole society or community” and it is “socially determined” (Hamilton, 1987, 18). Ideology’s common description that is used today comes from the thoughts of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels who argued that a person’s ideas do not stem solely from the individuals themselves but rather from the outside world and its ideology (Samalin, 2018). This was a revolutionary thought in the 19th century as before ideology had been associated as something tied just to the individual (Samalin, 2018). Marx and Engels questioned the notion that ideas and values would somehow be separate from the world surrounding them (Samalin, 2018).

Apple (2019, 18) lists three different descriptions of ideology as follows “(1) quite specific rationalizations or justifications of the activities of particular and identifiable occupational groups... (2) broader political programs and social movements; and (3) comprehensive world-views, outlooks, or what Berger and Luckmann and others have called symbolic universes”. Regardless of the approach to ideology, the description should always include its scope and its function (Apple, 2019). As ideology as a term has many meanings, it is necessary to explain in which way the term is used. In this thesis I use the ideology term as the second description

states: “broader political programs and social movements” (Apple, 2019, 18). I have chosen this description, because of the political nature of the ideology I will be examining in my thesis: communism.

2.2 Building the communist ideology

In the 1930s Nazism was the prevalent ideology in Germany, and its power to generate action was quite high. The ideology resulted in the genocide of Jews and minority groups since it believed in a clear hierarchy of races (Kershaw, 2004). In terms of economy, private firms dominated the scene during the economical rise in the 1930s in Germany, and there were few firms owned by the government (Buchheim, 2006). Even though the state made demands for the economy, for example in terms of what should be made out of raw materials, it did not own the firms themselves (Buchheim, 2006). In 1945 as Germany lost the Second World War and was divided into occupation zones governed by the Allied countries, in East Germany the Nazi ideology would have to make way for another ideology: communism. Communism according to Marx’ ideas can be summarized as the acknowledgement of the class struggle and the aim to break free from it (Luxemburg, 2018). Another important aspect of communism is the centralization of the economy to the governing state meaning that the state owns the businesses.

The GDR’s ideological positioning was difficult from the beginning since it needed to both be extremely loyal to the Soviet Union while still maintaining a neutral appearing image to the West especially at the beginning of its existence (Nothnagle, 1993). Concurrently it needed to build a national identity as a new socialist country while also aiming to get rid of the Nazi ideology. In order to achieve this, the GDR needed to resort to mythbuilding (Nothnagle, 1993). They needed to create a socialist past, present and future (Nothnagle, 1993). By reframing past events such as the Second World War, they aimed to create a past where the socialism in Germany had always existed. One example of reframing was the depiction of late musicians such as Bach and Beethoven as rebels who had fought against the society’s norms at their time (Nothnagle, 1993). Another example of reframing history was the narrative that described how Germany had not in fact lost the Second World War but rather German antifascists with the help of the Red Army had freed the country from the Nazi government (Nothnagle, 1993). By reframing history, the governing party of the GDR the SED (Sozialistische

Einheitspartei Deutschlands, eng. Socialist Unity Party of Germany) aimed to create unity within the country (Nothnagle, 1993). Reframing of past events is still used for example in Russia today (Zajda & Zajda, 2012).

The class struggle was a central concept to communism in the GDR. Everything was viewed through it including feminism (Fisher, 2002). The inferior position of women in the society was blamed on the class struggle, which was caused by the previous government's wrong ideology that still reflected into the society at the time (Fisher, 2002). Individuals were encouraged to create individual aims within the socialist aims (Fisher, 2002).

The communism of the GDR was more progressive than in other Soviet bloc countries (Fisher, 2002). For example, women had quite similar rights to those of men in matters such as equal pay, employment rights and socialist policies (Fisher, 2010). This was because of the socialist ideology, which insisted the inclusion of everyone, including women, in making "socialist decisions" (Fisher, 2010, 403). Even though distribution of women and men in the working population was almost 50-50, most women worked in low paid jobs (Fisher, 2002). The German communism was still very much masculinity based despite its more progressive nature (Fisher, 2002). Even today women in East Germany are more likely to work full time than the women living in West Germany (Fisher, 2010). The gender pay gap is 9% in the East in comparison to 18% in the West (Fisher, 2010). Therefore, the socialist ideology still can be seen in today's Germany at least to some degree.

Ideological power is connected to its capability to legitimate action (Schull, 1992). Since the ideological uncertainty of a nation can result in a social crisis (Ivashevskii, 2011), the communist ideology was heavily "sold" to the public in the countries under the control of the Soviet Union in order to achieve social security (Schull, 1992).

2.3 Education and ideology

Education and ideology are intertwined through their several connections and overlaps. The ideology of education affects the curriculum, the hidden curriculum, language usage of the teachers, the common sense social principles and values at schools and evaluation to name but a few (Apple, 2019). Schools exist to serve their ideological function(s) (Apple, 2019), and

through their relations to other institutions (Apple & Franklin, 2019). They are not isolated institutions that are not related to other structures in the society since for example politics affect education (Fuchs-Schündeln & Masella, 2016; Porges & Watts, 2018). Education and everything related to it such as curriculum is political since they always reflect the ideologies and values of the society (Apple, 2019). Especially in an authoritarian state education can effectively be used to indoctrinate the students to believe what the government wants them to believe (Cantoni et al., 2017).

Education is therefore not neutral (Apple, 2019), because it does not exist in a vacuum. It is in constant interaction with other institutions, and is shaped by them (Apple & Franklin, 2019; Fuchs-Schündeln & Masella, 2016). The argument of neutrality of scientific and technical knowledge taught in education is made to try to hide the ideology behind it (Apple & Franklin, 2019). All knowledge taught in school and written in the curriculum is a value-based decision (Apple, 2019), because all knowledge cannot be included. The decision is made based on the ideology of the society. The interaction of ideology and school can be divided into three sections according to Apple (2019, 14): the school experience and teaching methods, curriculum's ideological nature, and the underlying values of the society. I will next be examining these sections one by one.

2.3.1 The school experience and teaching methods

The dominant ideology and social norms are strengthened through the everyday actions in schools (Apple & King, 2019). As the teacher follows the social norms and is responsible for the organization of the class, the teachers' socialization plays an important role in the classroom (Apple & King, 2019). For example, if the teacher has been socialized to believe that children should be quiet, and the teacher should do all the talking, they are likely to reproduce this in their own teaching.

The school experience of the child is dependent on what is expected as the future of the child or children (Apple & Franklin, 2019). This can be seen in what is emphasised in schools. For example, if the students are expected to become part of the labour force things such as punctuality are emphasised (Apple & Franklin, 2019). On the other hand, if the students are expected to become members of the managerial class, they are more likely taught flexibility and inquiry

(Apple & Franklin, 2019). The expectation of the child's future plays a crucial role in their education.

The educational environment at school is a result of ideological and political battle (Apple, 2019). The learning environment is built to aim to influence the students in a desired way (Apple, 2019). For example, if the students are hoped to learn group work skills as one of the main objectives of their education, their desks can be placed in desk groups. The school experience of the students can be quite different from one another depending on the learning environment as it displays the ideological focus of the teaching.

The teaching methods are dependent on the ideology. In education systems with high teacher autonomy, the teacher has the choice to determine their teaching methods. The teacher needs to not only acquire the knowledge on the topic but to also know how to teach it (Mnguni, 2021). The methods chosen show case the ideology that the teacher follows as well as what the teacher sees as "failure" or "success" for the students or themselves (Apple, 2019). For example, if the teacher thinks that tests are the best way to evaluate students' learning, and one student fails a test, the teacher might think that the student has failed in internalizing the knowledge provided to them. If the teaching methods required by the curriculum are not in line with the teacher's own teaching ideology, the implementation of the knowledge into teaching can be quite difficult (Mnguni, 2021).

2.3.2 Curriculum's ideological nature

Curriculum is not neutral but rather political and ideological (Apple, 2019). It is a framework for learning (Scott, 2014). Curriculum thinking is "based on ideological presuppositions" (Apple, 2019). Teaching and learning are affected by this curriculum ideology (Mnguni, 2021). The inclusion and therethrough exclusion of some knowledge, as not everything can be written in the curriculum, is a value-based decision (Apple, 2019; Scott, 2014). The government can formulate the curriculum to meet the needs of the society (Apple, 2019; Mnguni, 2021). The needs can be for example to increase employment (Apple, 2019). The government shapes the curriculum with the changes that happen in the society's ideology and in particular in the thinking of educational ideology.

The reproduction of the political ideology of the society is often the goal of the education and therethrough curriculum (Ivashevskii, 2011), which is why the construction of the curriculum is based on ideology (Crawford, 2000). What is included and excluded as necessary knowledge in the curriculum is a value-based decision (Apple, 2019). It shows what ideology deems important and what is not considered important (Ivashevskii, 2011). If for example the curriculum makers decide that in history classes Finnish independence is important and should be handled, they can put the topic in the curriculum. In doing so they make a value-based decision in determining that the topic is important. As not everything can be included, decisions need to be made on what to exclude. This means that some topics need to be deemed “unimportant” or “not relevant”. Therefore, curriculum is not neutral but rather political and ideological the same way education itself is (Apple, 2019). The decisions of inclusion and exclusion are often guided by the political ideology of the society and more specifically the government at the time.

Hidden curriculum means the goals of education that often are not written or even consciously acknowledged (Orón & Blasco, 2018). They are the “rules” that the student needs to learn how to play. Apple (2019) divides the different rule sets into two different rule sets at school. These are the basic rules and the preference rules (Apple, 2019). Basic rules are the general rules that guide everything that is done at school (Apple, 2019). These are “the rules of a game” (Apple, 2019, 89). At school these basic rules could for example be that a lesson is forty-five minutes and when somebody talks, one does not talk over the person. The hidden curriculum can be described as something that strengthens the basic rules at school (Apple, 2019). The preference rules are the rules that one can operate with within the limits of the basic rules (Apple, 2019). Preference rules include for example having the freedom to choose when one wants to answer. However, this still needs to be done within the basic rule set meaning that the student needs to raise their hand and wait until they are given the permission to talk, for example. All students experience the hidden curriculum and in order to manage school life they also need to internalize it (Wren, 1999, 594).

2.3.3 The underlying values of the society

Education and everything related to it is political (Apple, 2019). They always reflect the ideologies and values of the society (Apple, 2019). School as a place is where cultural transmission

happens so where the values of the society are transmitted to the next generation (Cantoni et al., 2017; Zsolnai & Lesznyák, 2015). This is one of the most relevant tasks of schools (Zsolnai & Lesznyák, 2015). Not only are values of the society transmitted, but also the social structures of the society (Apple, 2019). Due to socialization, the people accept their roles in the society and do not question them (Apple, 2019). The socialization process can be used to aim to construct the “right” ideology onto the student (Fuchs-Schündeln & Masella, 2016). The ideological dominance in schools and kindergartens is crucial to control the knowledge to be taught to the right people (Apple, 2019). Not everyone is entitled to the same knowledge, and this is one way to reproduce the social structure of the society to a new generation (Apple, 2019; Kickbusch & Everhart, 1985). When people feel that the division is natural and justified, there is no need for a change in their eyes (Apple, 2019). The socialization of children to fit the structure of the society starts in kindergarten, where the children learn the role of being in a school like environment (Apple & King, 2019).

Schools are institutions that exist to serve their ideological function (Apple, 2019). When the ideology shifts to another, education is changed to meet the new beliefs of the society (Zsolnai & Lesznyák, 2015, 143). Education is therefore not set-in stone but rather moves with the changes in the society. If for example democracy is now an important value, a shift in the society’s ideology might change the emphasis from democracy to individualisation. A shift in the education system can be detected in East Germany after the Second World War, which I will be using as my example to demonstrate how the ideology of the Soviet Union shaped the education system there.

3. East Germany after the Second World War and the denazification process

In the Yalta conference of February 1945, the Allied nations of Great Britain, the United States of America and the Soviet Union discussed the division of Germany into occupation zones, which was later on confirmed in the Potsdam conference in August 1945 (Sharples, 2015). Because of the division of Germany into occupation zones, during 1945-1949 East Germany was called the SBZ (Sowjetische Besatzungszone, eng. Soviet occupation zone of Germany) (Conacher, 2020). The two Germanies, FRG (Federal Republic of Germany, West Germany) and GDR, came to officially exist in 1949 (Rodden, 2009b). The SBZ and later the GDR was governed by the Soviet Union as one of the satellite states belonging to the Soviet Union. Because of this, all policy making was influenced by the communist ideology of the Soviet Union. In the 1950s and 1960s the GDR was considered even more authoritarian than the Soviet Union (Rodden, 2009b).

After the Second World War, the most important goal of the Allied countries in regards of all areas of the society was to remove everything that was connected to the former government and the Nazis. This process is called “denazification” (Rodden, 2002). The denazification process was seen essential, because the Allied hoped that through it, they could avoid another World War (Lansing, 2010). The denazification process happened in all four occupation zones of Germany (McDougall, 2008). The process can be divided into three different aspects in which it took place: 1. all people were forced to confront the crimes that the Nazis had done, 2. war crimes’ trials highlighted the structural nature of the Nazist government sheading light to the fact that this had been something more than just the individuals involved in it, and 3. removing Nazis or people with Nazist relations from positions of power and influence and to give them fines (Sharples, 2015). For example, one way that people were forced to see the crimes of the Nazis was that some Germans needed to bury the corpses of the Jews that had been killed in the concentration camps, whereas some people were forced to visit the concentration camps (Sharples, 2015). Because of the want to remove Nazis from high positions, by 1946 in East Germany ca. 450 000 former Nazis had been fired from their public positions (Sharples, 2015). In June 1945 the effectiveness of the denazification efforts was controlled with a survey, where the conclusion was that almost all participants had been in direct contact with the denazification efforts (Sharples, 2015). The denazification process had therefore reached many.

The denazification process was not just to all. For example, the inspections of people were often done so that people were first fired and afterwards it was determined whether they had been connected to the Nazis (Sharples, 2015). People who were later proven innocent still suffered financial losses due to the temporary firing (Sharples, 2015). The denazification process aimed to divide the population into five categories: “major offenders, offenders, lesser offenders, fellow travellers (followers) and exonerated persons” (Sharples, 2015, 24). However, it was not that easy to put people into these tight categories as there were so many individuals going through the process, which led to unfair punishments (Sharples, 2015). There were no direct guidelines in giving the punishments meaning that the trials were not fair, and people were given punishments that were not comparable with one another (Sharples, 2015).

The process was not successful on all accounts. In some fields almost 50% of the experts of that field were former Nazis (Sharples, 2015). This meant that it would be incredibly difficult to remove all former Nazis from their positions, which led to some former Nazis being fired and some not. The criteria were different in different geographical areas of the GDR, because there were no centralised guidelines for who was allowed to work and who was not (Sharples, 2015). Sometimes people were brought back to work after having first been fired, for example some teachers were brought back, because of the teacher shortage (Lansing, 2010).

Education was seen as an essential part of the denazification process both in West and East Germany (Neuner, 1997; Porges & Watts, 2018). In East Germany Nazism was viewed as “aggressive imperialist capitalism” (Weiner, 2018, 344), and it was central to the Soviet Union under this narrative not only to remove Nazism but to also promote the Marxist-Leninist ideology as the better ideology. Stalin as the leader of the Soviet Union and therethrough the SBZ saw educating, especially of the youth, as an essential part of nation building (Rodden, 2002), and wanted to use it as a way to get rid of the former Nazi ideology, and to build a new nation. Everything at schools was purged from textbooks and maps to lesson plans (Lansing, 2010). The denazification of education also included remodelling the curriculum to meet the communist ideology of the Soviet Union and firing teachers with connections to the former Nazi party (Rodden, 2002). However, because of the major teacher shortage, some teachers were afterwards asked to come back (Lansing, 2010). In West Germany the denazification process also took place, but in regards to education it was conducted as a shift back to the model from the Weimar republic in the 20th century as it was seen as a “neutral” model, neither communist

nor Nazi (Rodden, 2002). Both education systems were changed greatly, even though the direction in which they were taken was quite different.

4. The education system of East Germany

After the Second World War East Germany's ideology was more anti-fascist rather than pro-communist, because of the strong focus on the denazification process (Rodden, 2009b). This was also visible in education. The main goal of education in the 1946 Education Act was to get rid of the fascism in schools and to re-educate the people (Conacher, 2020). However, by the early 1950s all of GDR's education system had been transformed to fit the Marxist-Leninist ideology (Rodden, 2009b). The anti-fascist approach to education shifted in May 1953 when East Germany's education was centralised and everything about it was sovietized (Lansing, 2010). Even though the Soviet Union had a tremendous effect on the education system of the GDR, it was not identical to that of the Soviet Union's (Porges & Watts, 2018).

The beginning of the SBZ's education system can be described as difficult. Due to the denazification of education, between the years 1945 and 1946 circa 80% of all teachers in the SBZ were fired from their positions because of their former connections to the Nazis (Rodden, 2002), even though some were later on able to return in an effort to try to answer to the teacher shortage (Lansing, 2010). Furthermore, in the early 1950s more teachers were fired to have teachers with the right ideological thinking and background (Lansing, 2010). The shortage of teachers was tremendous in the late 1940s. In addition to teachers, there was also a shortage of school supplies and school buildings as many schools had been destroyed during the war (Lansing, 2010; Rodden, 2002). The shortage also concerned basic necessities such as food (Sharples, 2015). It was not until the 1950s that sufficient amount of textbooks and other school supplies were provided to the schools (Lansing, 2010). Concurrently the number of children in the SBZ grew from 1939 to 1946 by over 800 000, and many of these children were orphans (Rodden, 2002). The SBZ after the Second World War had less teachers and schools yet a tremendous increase in the number of children. Over 40 000 new teachers were needed to fill the open teacher positions (Rodden, 2002). In addition to this, the compulsory nature of education for all as presented in the Education Act in August 1946 resulted in the inclusion of many rural areas in the education system (Conacher, 2020), which meant that even more children took part in the education system than before. The education system was in crisis and it needed to be solved.

In the GDR education was valued, because it was seen as an essential way to transmit the communist values to the next generation (Rodden, 2010). The ideological beliefs affected the education system as the main task of the education was to create “socialist personalities” (Bruen, 2014; Fuchs-Schündeln & Masella, 2016). Therethrough also curriculum making was affected by the Marxist-Leninist ideology (Bruen, 2014). All subjects had the same goal: to spread the communist ideology (Bruen, 2014). The communist beliefs affected for example, the assessment criteria in the curriculum, which was created to achieve the goal of creating good citizens for the society according to the communist beliefs (Bruen, 2014). In the GDR students had a considerably high equality of opportunity (von Below et al., 2013). This was a result of the communist beliefs of workers having equal opportunities to those in a higher position (von Below et al., 2013). Apart from some students who took part in the special art and sport schools, all other students had exactly the same mandatory education (Rodden, 2010). This included also children from rural areas that had often before been left out of the education system (Conacher, 2020). The aim was to use education for the social equalization of the children (Borneleit, 2003).

From 1946 until the 1959, the education system consisted of an eight-year primary education, which all children and youth were required to attend regardless of their gender, family’s wealth or religion (Geissler, 2011). This meant that in theory all children had similar opportunities when it came to the comprehensive part of their education. The Education Act of 1946 had emphasised the importance of high quality education for all, and it remained as the main guideline for the education until the late 1950s (Conacher, 2020). Not only were the students exposed to the communist ideology and its beliefs at school, but it was also an important part of their freetime. In addition to mandatory education, all youth were expected to participate in youth organizations (Rodden, 2010). The youth organizations were a place for further indoctrination of the children to believe in the communist ideology (Rodden, 2010). One effort that was made as an attempt to ensure that the children were taught and introduced to the right ideology was the educating of “die Neulehrer”.

4.1 Curriculum

After the Second World War the main goal of the curriculum was the denazification of it as with all of education (Rodden, 2002). In addition to the denazification of the education system,

all subjects were influenced by the Marxist-Leninist ideology (Bruen, 2014; Borneleit, 2003). The curriculum was very specific for each subject including the teaching methods that the teachers were expected to adopt (Bruen, 2014). The detailed nature of the curriculum was because of the need for the teachers to not only teach about the things that were considered important but also to present the content in the way, which was deemed appropriate by the government. Teacher autonomy was therefore quite low. Most of the teaching was determined from outside the school because of the detailed nature of the curriculum (Borneleit, 2003). Other philosophies and ideologies were rarely discussed, and when they were, they were presented in the context of how one could counterargument their ideas (Bruen, 2014). The students needed to be able to counterargument so that they would be more convinced that their own socialist conviction was the correct one (Bruen, 2014). If the student showed conviction to the communist ideology, it positively affected the evaluation at school (Bruen, 2014).

The curriculum of the GDR aimed to include the socialist ideology into every subject in it (Fuchs-Schündeln & Masella, 2016). The curriculum's aim was the same as the whole education system's: to create socialist personalities (Bruen, 2014; Fuchs-Schündeln & Masella, 2016). The same way that the economy of the GDR was centralised, also the curriculum of the GDR was a central curriculum (Porges & Watts, 2018). The central curriculum aimed to provide the same guidelines and contents for all students and teachers to ensure that the education was aiming for the same goals and ideological education everywhere in the GDR. The new curricula that came in 1946 focused on natural sciences, math and learning a foreign language, which in many areas was Russian (Conacher, 2020). Mathematics lessons per week were quite high, because of its position as a central subject (Borneleit, 2003).

4.2 “Die Neulehrer”

In 1945 to answer to the shortage of teachers, the government of the SBZ started a three to four-week course to educate new teachers to fill the teacher positions in schools (Porges & Watts, 2018; Rodden, 2002). In 1946 the education of teachers became longer up to 8 months and in 1947 it became a one-year long training (Rodden, 2002). These teachers were called “Neulehrer” (eng. New teacher(s)) (Rodden, 2002). The mass educating of new teachers rose from the need of denazifying the teaching staff, which is why the teacher training was quite short (Rodden, 2002; Porges & Watts, 2018). The sovietization of teachers and other staff began in the

1940s and it continued in the 1950s accelerating then (Lansing, 2010). In the early 1950s a little under 10% of all teaching staff was fired in an effort to make the teaching staff's ideological ground once again more soviet (Lansing, 2010).

At first the Neulehrer selection and education was done locally with looser guidelines, but in late summer of 1945 this was changed to a more centralised system (Lansing, 2010). The centralised system reform included the guidelines of the selection process (Lansing, 2010). In the selection of these teachers the most important matter was their ideology rather than their own education background or pedagogy (Gruner, 1997; Rodden, 2002). The selection makers were instructed to firstly look at candidates that were young, in their 20s, preferably female and that could be proven to not have ties to the Nazis (Lansing, 2010). Secondary qualification criterium was educational background (Lansing, 2010). Only elementary school education was required as background education for the person to be accepted into the teacher programme (Rodden, 2002). Some Neulehrer were only sixteen years old when they became teachers (Rodden, 2009b). Replacing the teachers with new ones with the "correct" ideology was essential to the success of the education reform in the SBZ (Gruner, 1997). Some of the teachers who taught the Neulehrer were former members of the Nazi party (Lansing, 2010). This is quite contradicting in itself considering that the aim of the whole education of the Neulehrer was to remove those with Nazist background from educational spaces, and it was also the most important selection criteria for the Neulehrer applicants (Gruner, 1997; Rodden, 2002). In the early 1950s ca. 80% of all teachers in the GDR were Neulehrer (Conacher, 2020).

Over the years "Neulehrer" as a word became a synonym to "unqualified" in the German language (Rodden, 2002). This was because yearly from 25 to 45 percent of teachers quit and started (Rodden, 2002) making them seem like beginning teachers with little experience and expertise. The annual turnover's significancy led to the teacher's not getting enough experience in the field to acquire the knowledge to be able to provide high quality teaching. With the numbers of students to be taught high (Lansing, 2010; Rodden, 2002), and the number of pupils per teacher therethrough also high, the Neulehrer needed to work under difficult circumstances with little competences from their teacher education (Lansing, 2010). The class sizes were often big, there were not many school supplies available and the ages of the students in the class could vary for example between 7 and 14 years making the teaching of the classroom even more

challenging (Lansing, 2010). The quality of teaching and pedagogical knowledge was reported to have significantly decreased in 1946 (Lansing, 2010).

Because of the short nature of the Neulehrer education, the education did not provide competences or theoretical knowledge for the teachers to be able to provide high quality teaching, which led to the synonymous usage of the word “Neulehrer” to be used to mean “unqualified” giving the word a negative undertone (Rodden, 2002). Due to the demeaning usage of the word, the governing and only party of the GDR, SED (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, eng. Social Unity Party of Germany), forbade the word to be used in official settings to describe teachers in 1952 (Rodden, 2002). They proposed the usage of a simpler word “Lehrer” (eng. teacher(s)) to replace the word Neulehrer in official usage, and the word “Lehrer” was thereafter used in official language (Rodden, 2002).

4.3 Textbooks

Textbooks are an important part of many education systems (Rodden, 2009b). They serve the purpose of the education system (Rodden, 2009b), and reflect the ideology of the society (Porges & Watts, 2018). After the Second World War and the division of Germany into occupation zones, the question of textbooks at schools was something that the Western Allied and the Soviets disagreed upon (Rodden, 2009b). The disagreement on textbooks reflected the general tension of the political situation between the Western Allied and the Soviets, which stemmed from the ideological differences of the two (Rodden, 2009b). This ideological divide was what eventually led to the division of Germany into West and East Germany in 1949 (Rodden, 2009b). In regards of textbooks the ideological difference could be seen in that the Western Allied wanted to use the textbooks to promote democracy, freedom of speech and press whereas the Soviets wanted to promote the Marxist-Leninist ideology (Rodden, 2009b).

In the GDR, textbooks were an essential part of spreading the Marxist-Leninist ideology. The textbooks needed to change, because of the reform in the society’s ideology (Porges & Watts, 2018). The main purpose was to achieve the goal of GDR’s education in general: to create socialist personalities (Bruen, 2014). In designing and making the textbooks the Soviets were careful not to repeat the same mistakes that the Western Allied had done in Italy after they had occupied it in 1943 (Rodden, 2009b). The Western Allied had used the same books as the fascist

government of Italy with just removing the sections that glorified fascism (Rodden, 2009b). This was not sufficient enough as some families had old copies of the textbooks with the pages containing the glorification of fascism, and these “forbidden pages” became an interest to the children (Rodden, 2009b). This is the reason why the Soviets decided to make their own books from the beginning until the end in the GDR (Rodden, 2009b).

First Marxist-Leninist textbooks came out in late 1945 for grades 1-4 (Rodden, 2009b). However, the Marxist-Leninist textbooks for upper elementary grades as well as secondary schools were first introduced in 1949 (Rodden, 2009b). Before there were sufficient numbers of books for the students, ideological pamphlets were made to meet the need of textbooks (Lansing, 2010). Everyone used the same books, which were updated every few years (Sharples, 2015). Like all education in the GDR, also textbooks and before them pamphlets served the purpose of showing communism and the achievements of the socialist countries as superior to the achievements done in the west. All textbooks were guided to be modelled from the works of Marx and Lenin (Rodden, 2009b). Textbooks gave the youth the views they were expected to adopt including what to think about the West, especially the United States (Rodden, 2009b, 270). Students were hoped to be able to defend their own socialist stance as well as reject the western countries and their ideologies (Bruen, 2014).

The lengths to which the ideology affected the textbooks varied even though it was visible in all textbooks of the GDR (Rodden, 2009a). For example, history was taught from the point of view of the class struggle so from a Marxist point of view (Rodden, 2009b). In mathematics, the workbook problems were made to show how much better the GDR was in comparison to the West (Rodden, 2009a). For example, the mathematical problem could concern the GDR’s brown coal exports or the Soviet space records (Rodden, 2009a). The math problems could also aim to show the GDR as the superior country in relation to the United States as can be seen from the following example from a GDR mathematics book: “Workers in the GDR water industry presented 10 water pumps, valued at East German marks 40,000, to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, so that the irrigation lines destroyed by US bombers could be repaired. What was the total value of this gift?” (Rodden, 2009a, 286). Therefore, mathematics textbooks were utilized to serve the ideological purpose of the GDR.

Hard sciences' textbooks were the least affected by the ideology (Rodden, 2009c). The teaching of hard sciences was also more free than the teaching of some other subjects such as history (Rodden, 2009c). Even though the ideology did not affect hard sciences as much as it did social sciences, it did still have an effect on hard sciences (Rodden, 2009c). Teachers of hard sciences were expected to include the Marxist-Leninist ideology into hard sciences the same way all teachers needed to include it in their own subject (Rodden, 2009c). For example, important chemical factories in the GDR were mentioned by name in chemistry to further glorify the magnificence of the GDR (Rodden, 2009c). However, the Marxist-Leninist theory itself was rarely discussed in the books so the focus of the ideology was on its applications in real life rather than on the theory (Rodden, 2009c).

4.4 Education for hatred

One of the main functions of the education system in the GDR was to make the students believe the communist ideology. An essential part of this was to distinguish the GDR from West Germany and from other capitalist states (Rodden, 2002). Education was used as a “weapon” and it was “aimed” at the West. As a part of this, textbooks were made to include pictures and text that was making people and the ideology of the west seem inferior to that of the GDR (Weiner, 2018). West Germany was seen as a continuation of the Nazi era in the textbooks (Weiner, 2018). In addition to West Germany being viewed as a horrible country, also the USA was depicted as an enemy of communism (Rodden, 2010). The textbooks included detailed descriptions of the crimes that the Nazis had done so as to spread the message that all other governments and ideologies were inferior to that of the GDR (Weiner, 2018). Schools were not the only place where the hatred towards the USA was shown. It was also present in the media. The media tried to show the USA as the country controlling the western world, and therethrough as an oppressor and enemy (Hoff & Mühl-Benninghaus, 2004). The USA was painted as the villain. However, the government feared the influence of the USA. Especially the mass culture and media of the USA were dreaded by the government of the GDR as they feared that they would be exposed for their propaganda (Hoff & Mühl-Benninghaus, 2004).

In the 1950s, there was a shift from sovietization to Stalinization (Rodden, 2002). The Stalinization included the personal cult around Stalin, where he was depicted as the protector of peace

(Corbesero, 2011). The shift resulted in an educational campaign called the Education for Socialist Patriotism, which was started in 1952 (Rodden, 2002). The campaign was better known in the West as education for hatred (Rodden, 2002). The students were expected to internalize the socialist ideals and to fight against those who opposed it (Bruen, 2014; Rodden, 2002).

5. Discussion

In the GDR ideology was clearly visible in the education system. The Marxist-Leninist ideology influenced all parts of it from textbooks to teacher education. The education system was transformed to serve its ideological function ever since the Soviet Union took over East Germany in 1945 (Lansing, 2010). Education was used in hopes of spreading the communist ideology and to create socialist personalities (Bruen, 2014; Fuchs-Schündeln & Masella, 2016). In the curriculum the ideology is easily depictable, because of the strict guidelines for teaching methods of the teachers, the influence of the ideology on the content wanted to be taught, and the evaluation being affected by the students ideological standing (Bruen, 2014; Borneleit, 2003). The teacher training was utilized to create teachers with the “right” ideological standing, and the former teaching staff with Nazi connections were fired (Rodden, 2002). All textbooks and their topics from history to mathematics and everything in between were influenced by the communist ideology. They were enhanced to further spread the message that the Western Allied, especially the United States were the enemy strengthening the hate towards the west (Rodden, 2009a; Rodden, 2009b).

Ideology in education exists also today. It is not a product of the past but is very much present in today’s world. For example, in the United States and Russia history textbooks and education in schools is used as a tool of politics (Tsyrlina-Spady & Lovorn, 2015). The history education in these countries is used to build a common ideology and to promote a national identity (Tsyrlina-Spady & Lovorn, 2015). National identity can be pursued through the usage symbols, which Putin has utilized to depict the greatness of Russia (Tsyrlina-Spady & Lovorn, 2015). These symbols include Russian flags and parades that showcase the country’s military power, and they are used to promote pride in the Russian history, present and future (Tsyrlina-Spady & Lovorn, 2015). The Russian history textbooks use this same rhetoric glamorizing the greatness of Russia (Zajda & Zajda, 2012). Both the United States and Russia have heroifications of figures of today’s world or of the past in their history textbooks (Tsyrlina-Spady & Lovorn, 2015). These are used to promote the building of a national identity. The danger of this kind of history teaching is summarized by Tsyrlina-Spady and Lovorn (2015, 162): “... when the values and moral exemplars being conveyed to students are presented with the primary purpose of augmenting the political or patriotic agendas of the state, history education becomes more about the pursuit of a common ideology and national identity than about the development of critical

or historical thinking skills.” The students’ focus is shifted from understanding, analysing and criticizing history to glamorizing it.

Education is always used to spread an ideology, even if the ideology does not have a defined name. The ideology within an education system can also be a sum of different ideologies such as neo-liberal ideology and environmental ideology. Schools hold great power in them as they are where children adopt the norms and values of the society surrounding them (Zsolnai & Lesznyák, 2015). This power should not be underestimated or overlooked. It is used to recreate the social structures of the society (Apple, 2019). If ideology is not considered and clearly visible to the educators, they might mindlessly just transfer the norms, values and social structures to the children.

Not one education system exists without its political and ideological underpinnings (Apple & Franklin, 2019), even though the agenda is sometimes not as clear to detect as it was in the GDR. Even if the agenda is not clear, it does not mean that the ideology behind the education system is not there. Analysing different ideologies can help educators understand why the education system is structured in a specific way. They might find their work more meaningful when they know why they are expected to do their work according to the system. Or they might realise that the system is in serious need of change, and they can start to work towards creating a better education system. Awareness is the first step in understanding not only your own position as an educator but also the underpinnings of the system in which you operate.

6. References

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