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**DIMITAR KATSAROV'S PEDAGOGICAL LEGACY – A BRIDGE BETWEEN EUROPEAN AND BULGARIAN EDUCATION**

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**Abstract:** The paper is of both historical and theoretical nature. Its goal is, by taking into account the set of specific social conditions underlying D. Katsarov's views and beliefs, to elucidate the significance, value, and relevance of Prof. Dimitar Katsarov's pedagogical legacy. The new educational objectives of the Bulgarian school system have their historical grounds and thus their contemporary understanding is made possible through the historical and logical analysis of our pedagogical heritage. The democratization of society creates conditions for an objective assessment of this heritage, an assessment free from the influence of the ideological status quo. In this regard, Dimitar T. Katsarov's pedagogical heritage is undisputed of interest. The scholar's ideas are a historical fact. Some are debatable; others still inspire the pedagogical community with their pertinence to contemporary issues. Dimitar Katsarov's work in the field of pedagogy is diverse and kaleidoscopic. His name is synonymous with the reformist pedagogy in Bulgaria. Despite the abundant records on the development of psychological and pedagogical sciences in Europe and Bulgaria, D. Katsarov's pedagogical heritage is still a valuable source of information on the upbringing, education and training of adolescents in Bulgaria in the first half of the 20th century. This information is not only necessary for contemporary pedagogy, but is also a stimulus for the adequate development of the pedagogical theory and practice in Bulgaria. In this respect, his theoretical legacy is of utmost importance in the dialogue on the present and the future of Bulgarian education. Some of Prof. D. Katsarov's theoretical statements which still relate to the problems of contemporary pedagogy called for the current review of his work within the historical development of pedagogical ideas in our country. Professor D. Katsarov's views and achievements are evaluated not only in terms of the contemporary pedagogical concepts. This paper also looks into the extent to which they rose to the level of scientific research of the pedagogical science of the time; the extent to which they reflected the humanistic aspirations of the age, into the objective role they played and into the results they achieved. The paper is of both historical and theoretical nature. Its goal is, by taking into account the set of specific social conditions underlying D. Katsarov's views and beliefs, to elucidate the significance, value, and relevance of Prof. Dimitar Katsarov's pedagogical legacy resulting from the deep knowledge of the essence and laws of the pedagogical phenomena, processes and activities. Some of Prof. D. Katsarov's theoretical statements which still relate to the problems of contemporary pedagogy called for the current review of his work within the historical development of pedagogical ideas in our country. The achievement of the goal is conditioned by the solving of the following main tasks: (1) differentiation and analysis of key pedagogical ideas in D. Katsarov's work; and (2) outlining the contemporary dimensions of D. Katsarov's pedagogical ideas in a socio-pedagogical context.

**Keywords:** pedagogical theory and practice, experimental pedagogy, education, upbringing, natural education.

Nowadays, it is not possible to separate contemporary education from its historical foundations, from everything significant that pedagogy has created earlier. The renunciation of what was achieved in the past in terms of culture education, upbringing, and pedagogy leads to nihilism, contradictions and stagnation of the school system. Objectively analyzing our pedagogical heritage and revealing its logical connections with the present, is the scientific approach to overcoming the impact of dogma, schema, prejudice and ideology on pedagogical theory and practice.

In this respect Dimitar T. Katsarov's pedagogical heritage is of an undoubted interest. His views and ideas are a historical fact. Some are debatable; others still excite the pedagogical community as they are in line with contemporary problems. Dimitar Katsarov's work in the field of pedagogy is diverse and kaleidoscopic. His name is synonymous with the reformist pedagogy in Bulgaria. With this study, we want to pay tribute to the scientist whose career, for more than half a century, was related to the training of pedagogists and who has had a significant role in the development of pedagogical sciences in Bulgaria.

The study is of both historical and theoretical nature. Its goal is, by taking into account the set of specific social conditions underlying D. Katsarov's views and beliefs, to emphasize on everything that is significant, valuable, and relevant as a result of the thorough knowledge of the essence and laws of pedagogical phenomena, processes and activities.

The goal is achieved by solving the following main tasks:

1. Identification and analysis of key pedagogical ideas in D. Katsarov's works.

2. Outlining the contemporary dimensions of D. Katsarov's pedagogical ideas in a socio-pedagogical context.

The object of the study is the pedagogical work of D. Katsarov contained in his published and unpublished monographs, studies, articles and lecture courses, as well as in the materials related to the evaluation of his work. The object also includes D. Katsarov's ideas on the scientific status of pedagogy, on the nature and functions of education, on basic pedagogical principles, on professional education, on moral development and education, on the teacher as a factor of upbringing in the field of pedagogical knowledge.

D. Katsarov developed both as a personality and as a pedagogy scholar influenced by the prolonged theoretical quests during a very complex and contradictory period of time against the backdrop of the clash between philosophical, psychological and pedagogical concepts.

He grew up in the family of progressive teachers who were respectful of the traditions and the moral and social values that have evolved throughout the Bulgarian history. It was at home that D. Katsarov was introduced to L. Tolstoy's work and pedagogical ideas for the first time. The years spent at the Military School influenced D. Katsarov's understanding of the meaning of human life and its value and the inhumane nature of wars.

The period of studies at Geneva University had a particular impact on D. Katsarov. Alongside with the varied theoretical and practical training he received there, his stay with Prof. Claparede and the work in his laboratory allowed D. Katsarov to create broad international contacts with scholars in the field of psychology and pedagogy. His rich linguistic culture, personal connections and acquaintances with some of the most prominent Western European and world scholars such as Edouard Claparede, Jean Piaget, Maria Montessori, John Dewey, Henri Wallon, Rabindranath Tagore allowed him to familiarize himself with the emerging pedagogical trends and innovations in education.

After his return to Bulgaria in 1910, D. Katsarov found himself in a turbulent political environment and cultural revival. He worked in collaboration with the young and ambitious scholar from St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University who had solid academic background and the determination to give impetus to the development of Bulgarian science. His entire scientific and professional career was extremely academic. During the period he worked actively, he was elected Dean of History and Philology Faculty twice (1928-1929 and 1938-1939) and Rector of the Sofia University for the period 1942 - 1943.

Prof. D. Katsarov was one of the founders of the Pedagogy academic major. Yosif Kovachev was the first lecturer in pedagogy and pedagogical psychology at the Sofia Higher School that later on became Sofia University. The second lecturer was Prof. Petar Neykov, followed by Nikola Aleksiev and Dimitar Katsarov. It was this specialty that took up the better part of Prof. D. Katsarov's teaching and scientific career [24, 8].

Professor Katsarov's 40-year teaching career comprised three main areas: general pedagogy, experimental pedagogy and child psychology. It also included a number of treatises that complemented and expanded the three major courses.

These issues were extensively discussed in the Natural Education journal that he edited and published for 20 years. It was the tribune for the ideas of leading names in European and world pedagogical thought, such as Edouard Claparede, Peter Petersen, Maria Montessori, Georg Kerschner, Ellen Kay, Ovide Decroly, John Dewey, Rabindranath Tagore, L. N. Tolstoy and others.

The For Kindergarten Teachers course, established and developed by him, but also recognized by the state provided the necessary training for more than 200 teachers. The purpose of the course was to demonstrate what the training of these specialists should be. For this purpose, he organized and ran a model kindergarten showcasing different teaching methods. Applying the most valuable elements of European theory and practice, this course was Katsarov's most significant contribution to the development of pre-school education in Bulgaria.

It was at his initiative and with his active participation the first classes as well as the first boarding schools for mentally retarded children were established. He laid the foundations of the St. Cyril and St. Methodius experimental school (which is now Prof. D. Katsarov school), the activity of which provides valuable knowledge of the pedagogical theory and practice of the time. Later, he supported the establishment of a school for morally children who had been abandoned or exposed to negative moral influence, which he called Home of Compassion.

Prof. D. Katsarov spoke French, Russian, German and English fluently [2]. This allowed him not only to read the international pedagogical literature in original, but also to make personal contacts with fellow pedagogists during his travels abroad. In order to study the educational work, he visited almost all countries in Europe [3]. He was invited to and participates as a speaker in various international conferences and congresses. He spent one year in the United States of America as scholarship student of the Rockefeller [4].

Prof. D. Katsarov's scientific work was not limited within the borders of our country only. It is also well-known abroad and recognized for its merits. In 1952 he was the official Bulgarian representative at the International

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Conference on Child Protection in Vienna [5]. He was a member of the International Bureau of Education in Geneva, of the International Organization of Primary Teachers and of the Organization of Secondary Teachers. Prof. D. Katsarov was an honorary chairman of the International League for New Education whose seat is in London [6]. In Bulgaria he contributed greatly to raising the reputation of the pedagogical science and the Bulgarian school and for establishing a new attitude towards it and its tasks. For his lifetime pedagogical and social activity, in 1947 Prof. D. Katsarov was elected a corresponding member of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

His views of man as being of highest intrinsic value are the philosophical basis of his worldview. All this defines him as a representative of that generation of scholars and public figures who set off the Renaissance traditions and made a significant contribution to the cultural development of Bulgaria in the first half of the 20th century. Some of his democratic and humanistic ideas are expressed particularly vividly in his pedagogical work.

Among Bulgarian pedagogists, he is one of the first to analyze the problem of the object, subject and tasks of pedagogy as a science. He considers education and upbringing as practical activities for the shaping of an individual and pedagogy - the theoretical knowledge, explanation and justification of these activities. He accepted that education was a generalized term involving training and upbringing. At that time it was only him who advocated such a view, which became of interest years after that. A confirmation of this is the fact that the same thesis was outlined in the Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century, presented by Jacques Delors. At its core lies education as a social phenomenon that is subjected to a comprehensive and detailed analysis.

Influenced by the ideas of experimental psychology and pedagogy in Europe in the beginning of twentieth century, Dr. Katsarov set the foundations of experimental research in Bulgaria. He was the forerunner of experimental psychology and pedagogy in Bulgaria and contributed significantly to raising the level of pedagogical research in Bulgaria. D. Katsarov read the Experimental Pedagogy systemic course [16] and published the comprehensive The Experimental Study in Pedagogy essay [17].

During this period emerged the tendency to study children through applying the methods of rigorous scientific experimentation. This was considered to be the most urgent task whose successful fulfillment would result in establishing pedagogy as a full-fledged science. That is why Katsarov was engaged in the study and dissemination of the tests that gained popularity at the time. He knew well the current level of test development and was conversant with its basic procedures. That is why under his guidance his students were able to carry out tests, to which they testify themselves [9, 25].

A significant event during this period was the translation and standardization of the Stanford revision the Binet-Simon test carried out by D. Katsarov and G. Piriov in 1939 [3].

Throughout his professional career, D. Katsarov not only conducted a number of studies, but also prepared whole classes of pedagogists for independent research work. His research in this field [17; 18] has been a model of approach, organization and methodology ever since. It has not lost its scientific merit and is a valuable source of comparison today.

D. Katsarov's achievements in pedagogical research in terms of theory and practice are the sound foundation on which the current methodology and research methods are built. That is why his achievements in this field must be considered from an objective historical perspective and be valued accordingly.

As a reformer pedagogist, D. Katsarov criticized the current education which did not satisfy the growing needs of life and did not meet the public demand, and he therefore justified the need to reform the educational system. When education is not directly connected with life, it cannot prepare individuals to be active and useful members of society, noted D. Katsarov. According to him, it was the time to abandon the idea that education, respectively school education, meant only applying educational techniques in order to convey a certain amount of knowledge. Changes in the teaching content, school curricula and teaching methods should reflect the changing social conditions and correspond to the new social needs.

D. Katsarov formulated the main task of education as the socialization of the individual and the social recognition of the exceptional value of each individual as well as the creation of conditions for their personal assertion. D. Katsarov's thesis was that there should be no conflict between the interests of the individual and those of society. Individuality was a fact of reality as was society, and in no case was it to be regarded as subordinate to society, the way the cell is subordinate to the body. The beliefs that there was opposition between the individual and society were, in his view, equally fatal to the development of both the individual and society.

D. Katsarov justified the social origin and nature of education. He viewed it as an instrument of public improvement. According to his belief, it was an essential tool for "social progress and change". In this context, he formulated a number of education problems that are still unsolved and which, taken together, outline its social implications [10].

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D. Katsarov was one of the few Bulgarian pedagogists to consider the role of the church in organizing education. He was convinced that the intervention of the church was not necessary and that it should not compete with the state in this area. Instead, he argued that the formation of religious and spiritual culture is the specific task for the church. It consists in ensuring that every member of society was well aware of the importance and necessity of spiritual and moral criteria for valuing the significance of every manifestation of life.

D. Katsarov's idea of education sounds up-to-date when perceived in its broad sense – both as school education and free education, which has to be organized so as to provide a constant harmony between the individuals, between the social groups and their interactions.

For the first time in our pedagogical theory, D. Katsarov dealt with the problems of professional guidance and education. He formulated the tasks of general education from the point of view of choosing a profession. His criticism of the early professional specialization of children as a common characteristic of the Bulgarian and West European professional systems is extremely relevant today [13].

His definition of education as a continuous process of enrichment through acquiring knowledge and developing skills and as a process of shaping the individual as well as the relationships between individuals, groups and peoples, is still particularly relevant.

The idea of continuous lifelong learning is now of utmost importance. It goes beyond the traditional differences between the needed basic education and lifelong learning. Today, lifelong learning will be one of the main priorities when solving the problems of the 21st century [10].

Adult education is an important public issue in D. Katsarov's pedagogical heritage. The essence of his views in this regard is that what we call compulsory education for adolescent generations must be extended as much as possible through the various forms of "post-secondary, natural and further education". All means have to be used in order to enable adults to continuously expand their education.

This distinguished pedagogist has a special merit for the development of social pedagogy and its differentiation as an independent scientific area in the system of pedagogical sciences. His ideas in this field are an ideological and theoretical basis for the future development of social pedagogy in Bulgaria. Dimitar Katsarov analyzed the problem of children who either at birth or later on were exposed to particularly challenging circumstances caused by health, social or economic factors. He attempted at providing a comprehensive characterization of this category of children and at covering the main aspects of the related problems. He called for supervision of socially neglected children, children with mental deviations and those with antisocial behavior, as well as for adequate education for the sick, mentally retarded, emotionally unstable or gifted children. Although his views on this matter developed way back in the past, they are still of certain value nowadays.

D. Katsarov's ideas on upbringing as a global pedagogical process in which the individuality of the child is emphasized on are particularly relevant today. Adopting the views of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann-Heinrich Pestalozzi, D. Katsarov restated the idea that we must revere human nature that blooms in a child. According to him, it is the blossoming of this nature that is the key to making people better and society perfect. Therefore, it is the significance of the child that underlies the main pedagogical principles and postulates developed throughout the works of the distinguished Bulgarian pedagogist.

Dimitar Katsarov is one of the first Bulgarian pedagogists to address the issues of civil education and upbringing. Every change in the life of the society turned the upbringing of its members into a major social issue. D. Katsarov assumed that the physical, mental and moral improvement of the individuals was the starting point for any "public improvement". Today, it is clear that the success of any kind of social transformation requires that at least some members of the society had previously received the proper education. That is why, in his opinion, new forms and elements of civil education should find their place in the system of education. The state should be interested in preparing adolescents for "active and useful citizenship" which includes not only the knowledge and fulfillment of public responsibilities but also the development of all moral virtues in the individual. The civil education and upbringing of students today is one of the most debatable issues, both in theory and in practice. That is why Dimitar Katsarov's views that school and education should not only teach adolescents but also should also prepare them to be good citizens are valid even nowadays. In *Natural Education* journal, which he edited and published, he promoted the idea of civil education and schooling in Europe publishing the views of its most prominent advocates. All of the abovementioned is his contribution to complementing and perfecting the structure and essence of pedagogical science, for which he is rightly considered one of the Bulgarian pioneers in this area.

An extremely interesting and original thinker, D. Katsarov etched a lasting mark on the theory and practice of education. With its originality and distinctiveness, D. Katsarov's academic output has played a significant role in the turbulent and successful development of the Bulgarian pedagogical science. An accomplished and sophisticated

scholar, a true talent with extraordinary power to deduce and convince, D. Katsarov was the first Bulgarian pedagogist and researcher whose diverse interests contributed to the versatile development of Bulgarian pedagogy. Undoubtedly, due to his entire pedagogical legacy, Prof. Dimitar Katsarov occupies a significant place in both Bulgarian and European theory and practice.

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