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## Youth religious education: from the ideas of reformist pedagogy to modern times


### Релігійна освіта молоді: від ідей реформаторської педагогіки до сучасності

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Written by:

**Oleksiy Karamanov<sup>1</sup>**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0067-0747>


**Andrii Prokip<sup>2</sup>**

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-3477-3872>

**Andrii Tsiupryk<sup>3</sup>**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2921-7778>

**Kateryna Ivashchenko<sup>4</sup>**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1133-9635>

**Tetiana Koliada<sup>5</sup>**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9202-1196>

**Alla Dobryden<sup>6</sup>**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0786-0161>


#### Abstract


The purpose of the study is to investigate the state of youth religious education, taking into account the mutual influence of educational and religious ideas in Galicia in the context of Reformed pedagogy of the turn of the 20th century. To achieve the goal, three scientific tasks were solved, in particular: to study the main factors of dissemination and interpretation of the ideas of Reformed pedagogy in Galicia; to identify fundamental aspects of the interaction of educational and religious ideas; to consider the nature of postulates of religious or Christian pedagogy; to study the opinion of student youth regarding their religious beliefs and influence on worldview (225 students of various higher education institutions of Ukraine aged from 19 to 22 participated in the survey).

#### Анотація


Метою дослідження є вивчення стану релігійного виховання молоді з урахуванням взаємовпливу освітніх і релігійних ідей у теорії та освітній практиці Галичини в контексті реформаторської педагогіки на рубежі ХХ ст. Для досягнення мети було вирішено наукові завдання, зокрема: дослідити основні чинники поширення та інтерпретації ідей реформаторської педагогіки в Галичині; виявити фундаментальні аспекти взаємодії просвітницьких і релігійних ідей; розглянути природу постулатів релігійної або християнської педагогіки; вивчити думку студентської молоді щодо їхніх релігійних переконань і впливу на світогляд (в опитування взяли участь 225 студентів різних закладів вищої освіти України віком від 19 до 22 років). На основі аналізу впливу ідей реформаторської

<sup>1</sup> Doctor of Sciences (Pedagogy), Professor at the Department of General Pedagogy and Pedagogy of Higher School, Head of the Laboratory of Museum Pedagogy. Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Ukraine.  WoS Researcher ID: IAN-5627-2023

<sup>2</sup> Ph.D. (History), Associate Professor, Leading researcher at the Lviv Historical Museum, Ukraine.  WoS Researcher ID: JVO-5588-2024

<sup>3</sup> Doctor of Sciences (Pedagogy), Associate Professor at the Department of Applied Psychology and Pedagogy. Lviv State University of Life Safety, Ukraine.  WoS Researcher ID:GNZ-9934-2022

<sup>4</sup> Ph.D. (Pedagogy), Associate Professor at the Department of Social Pedagogy and Social Work. Pavlo Tychyna Uman State Pedagogical University, Ukraine.

<sup>5</sup> Ph.D. (Pedagogy), Associate Professor at the Department of Social Pedagogy and Social Work. Pavlo Tychyna Uman State Pedagogical University, Ukraine.  WoS Researcher ID: ITU-8453-2023

<sup>6</sup> Ph.D. (Pedagogy), Associate Professor at the Department of Educational Technologies and Pedagogical Creativity, Pavlo Tychyna Uman State Pedagogical University, Ukraine.

Based on the analysis of the impact of the ideas of reformatory pedagogy illustrated by Galicia of the early 20th century, the system of religious education from the points of view of Ukrainian and Polish pedagogues as well as religious figures is discussed. Religious education is emphasized to be a powerful means of developing moral values of the individual, and a significant factor of their social behavior. Facts of interaction of educational and religious ideas in the context of reformatory pedagogy in the theory and educational practice of Galicia are stated.

**Keywords:** reformatory pedagogy, religious pedagogy, moral values of an individual, Galicia, the early 20th century.

### Introduction

Religious factor always holds an important place in the development of any society leading to revealing and analysis of various concepts of faith, educational and spiritual values as well as religious freedom (freedom of conscience). While tracing various religious phenomena in the history of pedagogical thinking and educational practice, it is important to analyze the experience of certain European regions, in which the elements of religious education have undergone through some transformation during the reformation of the educational sphere without referring to the basic canons of faith. Galicia of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (now the western regions of Ukraine – Lviv, Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk) can serve as an example of such a region where one can observe tolerant coexistence of different ethnic groups as well as interesting educational and religious interactions due to the active dissemination of ideas and concepts of reformatory pedagogy.

The religious education of young people in Galicia, who were members of various state associations during the period of the spread of reformist pedagogy (late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), was characterized by its diversity, as they mainly represented Poles, Ukrainians, and Jews. Obviously, the worldview of these three peoples differed significantly, but we can find many common points (mainly related to the Catholic faith) related to the influence of the ideas of reformist pedagogy. The main approaches to understanding the basis of religious education can be illustrated by the educational and philosophical direction of cultural pedagogy, which considered education as a process of mastering the cultural heritage of mankind and, at the same time, as a process of

педагогіки, проілюстрованих Галичиною на початку ХХ ст., досліджується система релігійної освіти з точки зору українських і польських педагогів, а також релігійних діячів. Наголошується, що релігійне виховання є потужним засобом формування моральних цінностей особистості, вагомим фактором її соціальної поведінки. Викладено факти взаємодії освітніх і релігійних ідей у контексті реформаторської педагогіки в теорії та освітній практиці Галичини.

**Ключові слова:** реформаторська педагогіка, релігійна педагогіка, моральні цінності особистості, Галичина, початок ХХ століття.

personal self-improvement, emphasizing the unity of the social and subjective orientation of learning. Compared to the concept of naturalism, cultural pedagogy recognized the dependence of a person on the socio-cultural heritage and the regularity of the process of mastering universal values. Representatives of this trend (W. Dilthey, E. Spranger) pointed to the right of the individual to choose in the learning process those cultural achievements that meet his or her cultural needs and are significant for personal development. At the same time, they emphasized the active role of a person, which was manifested in his/her experiences and creative activity. At the same time, there was a religious trend (E. Ferster, J. Maritain) that demanded that schools be completely subordinated to moral and religious education, combining Christian pedagogy with both reformist and traditional ones. Education was seen here as “self-affirmation for man” on the way to God, to Christian brotherhood and love (Chmaj, 1938, pp. 353).

In our study, we used the following methods: problematic-historical, chronological, personalistic-biographical, theoretical generalization and comparison of historical facts, events, pedagogical phenomena, systematization and classification of historical and pedagogical literature, as well as the method of questionnaire in the format of an online survey.

### Literature Review

Modern scholars specify that from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century till the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century educational institutions in this area, reflecting the nature of development of the state and society, aimed at building pupils' values

which together can be defined as traditional spiritual values (Vorozhbit, 2013, pp. 95-100).

The issues stated above have been studied in various aspects by Ukrainian and Polish scholars such as W. Jamrózek (1994), A. Zakrzewska (2012), M. Pluskota (2012), Yu. Scherbyak (2012), V. Vorozhbit (2013), I. Strazhnikova (2014), B. Savchuk, & Yu. Chopyk (2015), K. Jurzysta (2017), particularly relating to social religious influences on the history of education, new educational context of religious doctrine, and education as a unifying factor of religion and culture, etc.

Modern works on the subject can be divided by nationality. As a rule, the works of Polish scholars touched upon general issues of religious education in interwar Poland (which at that time included Galicia), focusing on its humanistic nature, the relationship with “pedagogy of culture” and pedagogical personalism, etc.

At the same time, Ukrainian scholars emphasized the evolution of the theory and practice of religious education in Galicia and its role in spiritual, educational, and didactic activities.

When analyzing the views of Ukrainian and Polish educators in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Galicia on religious education, we should pay attention to several important figures.

Analysing the role of religious upbringing in human development, a famous Ukrainian pedagogue father Yulian Dzerovych<sup>7</sup> expressed his thoughts on the duration of upbringing. He believed that upbringing should last for such a period “*till a pupil realizes what their tasks toward God, society, the people and themselves are and what powers and means they have to fully perform these responsibilities*” (Dzerovych, 1905, pp. 43–45).

Revealing the educational role of the family, church and state, he emphasized the upbringing in the spirit of Christ’s faith and religion since “*it is the Christian upbringing that is most appropriate for the temperament and character of our people*” (Dzerovych, 1938, pp. 195–196).

During the period under review, it was obvious to refer to the aim of religious upbringing, which was seen in pupil’s personal spiritual and moral perfection and maturity as well as their independence. This can be reached only through long but gradual development of internal innate forces in mental, moral and aesthetic directions, and giving the relevant matter to these forces (Dzerovych, 1937, p. 25).

In Zygmunt Bielawski’s<sup>8</sup> opinion, the aim of religious upbringing was the development of appropriate values, personal and social maturity in pupils. According to the pedagogue, while reaching it, pupils had to get a certain complete specialization that would reveal and open them to “*the goodness and further development of the society they live in*” (Bielawski, 1934, p. 51).

According to the beliefs of a famous Polish Galician catechist Jan Rozkwitalski<sup>9</sup>, new pedagogical trends perfectly harmonized and coordinated with religious doctrine and features of the youth of that time. Main constituents of this worldview were world knowledge, values and the ideal of life (Roskwitalski, 1935, pp. 418-419).

In her researches, B. Żulińska came to a conclusion that upbringing work should always start from work on oneself: this requires creating relevant features that make work with children easier and lead to Christian love. Such features are the ability to listen, punctuality, hospitality, respect for the elderly, and respect for others’ work (Żulińska, 1928, pp. 129-130). So, the only tool in people’s social relations is love, and its highest ideal is God.

Jan Ciemńiewski considered religion to be the most important feature of a character; the right development of a character can’t happen without religion because “*without the revival of Christian sprouts, without their inoculation a true culture will not be produced; and humanity can return to the original state of barbarism; only true and sincere faith is a basis for rooted Christian life, only it can keep us in moral balance and save the world from total destruction*” (Ciemńiewski, 1907, p. 4).

In literature of the interwar period the term “school of religious life” was quite often used to

<sup>7</sup> Yulian Dzerovych (1871–1943) – a priest of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Galician pedagogue, church and educational and cultural figure, patron, professor.

<sup>8</sup> Zygmunt Bielawski (1877–1939) – a Polish pedagogue, theorist of religious and moral upbringing, academic teacher.

<sup>9</sup> Jan Rozkwitalski (1885–1939) – a Catholic priest, Polish pedagogue, catechist, theorist of religious and moral upbringing.

religious pedagogy. Such a school was meant to become the final evolution in catechism and contain two basic principles: of independence and concentration. That is why teacher's educational activity in this school had to be based on great love and respect for pupils, on the one hand, and on thorough knowledge of didactics and psychology, on the other hand (Roskewitski, 1928, p. 132).

### The aim of the research

The aim of the study is to investigate the state of youth religious education, taking into account the mutual influence of educational and religious ideas in the theory and educational practice of Galicia in the context of reformist pedagogy at the turn of the 20th century.

### Methodology

Among the numerous tendencies of reformatory pedagogy of the late 19th – early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a religious and pedagogic tendency should be singled out, the representatives of which tried to reconcile traditional postulates of the religious doctrine with the ideas of reformatory changes both in education and upbringing. From the scholars' point of view, this tendency focused rather on church and religious cultural tradition rather than political goals. It showed spiritual and moral upbringing of children as a way of understanding the meaning of human existence; treated it in an integrative unity with aesthetic and labor elements, based on faith and religious feelings (Vorozhbit, 2013, pp. 95-100).

Considering the issues chosen to examine, for main points worth attention are outlined below:

- firstly, the way the spread and interpretation of the ideas of reformatory pedagogy in Galicia took place;
- secondly, which most important aspects of interactions of educational and religious ideas can be highlighted;
- thirdly, the nature of postulates of religious or Christian pedagogy
- to study the opinion of student youth regarding their religious beliefs and influence on worldview.

Wide interpretation of religious themes within various pedagogical concepts enables the reference to relevant concepts, i.e. "moral upbringing", "religious upbringing", "spiritual upbringing", etc. One should notice that these concepts are of complementary nature since they

may be identified with pedagogical ethics, moral and spiritual values, cultural values and ideals.

Accordingly, local pedagogues developed the postulates of religious or Christian pedagogy, so that there was an embodiment of the true Christian spirit among people. Religion was a powerful means of forming the individual's worldview and moral values; it also served as a significant factor of the individual's social behavior.

The ideas of religious upbringing were embodied in the views of Ukrainian and Polish pedagogues and religious figures who emphasized the necessity of citizens' awareness of traditional concepts of faith and belief in the possibility to be both passionate Christians and thinking, independent persons at the same time.

Among the cross-cutting issues raised by pedagogues and religious figures one can distinguish:

- the search for the aim of religious upbringing and its role in person's life;
- the analysis of historical development of religious and moral pedagogy;
- the latest forms and methods of teaching religion in schools;
- the role of creativity in religious upbringing;
- the worldview and character formation with the help of religion.

During February–May 2023, in order to determine the level of awareness of pedagogical students of Ukrainian higher education institution regarding the issues of youth religious education in the context of the ideas of reformist pedagogy, an anonymous online survey was conducted, which contained 8 questions with suggested answer options and the opportunity to express own attitude to the problem.

225 students of various higher education institutions of Ukraine, aged from 19 to 22, took part in the survey.

### Results and Discussion

We take into account key moments of scholar's thought on perfection, independence and development of child's innate forces, which proves their knowledge of reformatory shifts in education of that time.

For example, the fact of a textbook by Zygmunt Bielawski "Religious and Moral Pedagogy (Catechetics)" revealing some psychological aspects of religious upbringing

alongside outlining the historical development of religious and moral pedagogy, as well as the proposal of forms and methods of teaching religion may serve as a proof.

When studying the peculiarities of the development of reformatory pedagogy of early 20<sup>th</sup> century, contemporaries remarked that new pedagogical trends must decisively influence the formation of the worldview and character of the youth. As a result, this will assist to bridge the gap between formal school and young people's private lives when *"school education will become the basis that will impact the psyche of a young person, penetrate into their essence and thus will form this person as an individual"* (Roskwitalski, 1935, pp. 418-419).

In particular, world knowledge was determined by the use of the principle of independence in religious cognition. The mentioned factor, which was derived from the church tradition, facilitated a certain revival of religious methods and opportunity for the youth to master religious doctrine independently (Karamanov, 2004, p. 9).

The next constituent was values that the pupil experienced in the process of religious cognition. This means that a young person experiences a certain value, and in the process of cognition receives what becomes a part of their new own "me". As a result, cognitive value becomes a new source of life. This constituent with its principles is close to the tendency of pedagogy of culture, which relates to religious pedagogy, since in pedagogy of culture, as well as in humanistic pedagogy, culture makes a basis as a world of spirit and values in forming humanistic development of the world and human (Jurzysta, 2017, p. 15).

The third constituent is the ideal of life that means creating a true life ideal based on deep faith in the Bible. The personality of catechist had to play an important role here (Roskwitalski, 1935, pp. 420-433).

The views mentioned above can be compared with the ideas of philosophic and pedagogical stance of personalism, which puts a human being in the centre of research interests as a personality and interprets religion as a personal connection of a human with God (Pluskota, 2012, p. 65).

In this regard, it can be noted that religious instinct is an important element in the structure of human consciousness, which is manifested in the search for happiness, the pursuit of perfection and better life, etc.

During the period under study, issues of the role of creativity in religious upbringing, which was crucial for the formation of a harmonious personality, became of great importance. According to the views of a Polish teacher Barbara Żulińska<sup>10</sup>, creativity is *"a divine spark, the flowering of thought that should develop Catholic doctrine"* (Żulińska, 1930, pp. 466-467).

In particular, she defined such terms of development of creativity in pedagogue's activity:

- an inner state that does not allow to implement things incompatible with the principles of faith and Christian ethics into the teaching process;
- the ability to justify one's opinions;
- the respect towards pupils striving to show their creative abilities;
- the increase of one's own independence;
- the creation of methods of upbringing, which are most derived from pupils' needs;
- the desire for continuous self-improvement – *"a creative person is a person of an idea, and therefore a person who can love"*;
- the formation of the ability to focus and concentrate (Żulińska, 1930, pp. 467-468).

According to the apt statement of the author, the things psychology and pedagogics teach are long known from the Gospel but teachers do not fully use Christ's teaching for pedagogical goals (Żulińska, 1930, p. 469).

In this respect, Jan Ciemniewski's<sup>11</sup> views deserve attention; his scientific interests focused on the issue of cognition and character training from a religious point of view. Outlining the concept of "a character", the author determined two different meanings:

- a character is an inner side of a person, their individual constitution, which distinguishes the individuality of each of us; in such a sense each human must have a character since everyone has a certain inner individuality;

<sup>10</sup> Barbara Żulińska (1881–1962) – a Catholic pedagogue, academic teacher, founder of children's medical camps in Galicia.

<sup>11</sup> Jan Ciemniewski (1866–1947) – a Catholic priest, Doctor of Philosophy and Theology, pedagogue; during the interwar period he educated the youth of Lviv grammar school.

- having a character means “*establishing a certain order and ethical rules in one’s life, a harmony with the right to follow the voice of conscience and reason because people with a character make conscience of the people*” (Ciemniewski, 1903, pp. 8-9).

The researcher believed that degeneration of human characters was the result of disregard for the laws of nature, the reason for which was the withdrawal from religion and transformation of the religious doctrine into pure formalism. He saw the way out of this state in the adaptation of the word of God to the needs of the new man, and following the example of pedagogy and psychology, in the search for “*new ways of introducing the eternal truths of faith to people*” (Ciemniewski, 1907, p. 5). Therefore, J. Ciemniewski in his views advocated the opportunity for all to be independent, creative, active individuals, and at the same time ardent followers of Christianity.

Scholars’ thoughts on the importance of practical application of the method of labour school in religion that should fully cultivate feelings and mental independence of man may serve as an important proof of educational and religious interactions in a pedagogical thought of that period.

The aim of this method was to evoke an intensive religious life and raise religious and ethical character. According to this, religious knowledge should not remain just knowledge but have to be implemented in real life on the grounds of Christian and Catholic ethics (Roskwitalski, 1928, pp. 70-71).

One can state that in Roskwitalski’s views an attempt to adjust new reformative pedagogics to religion was traced at the same time opening a way to new religious pedagogics. The key element of this pedagogics was spiritual aspect of the existence of a human. The inner activity of man and man’s ability to productively use their own opportunities were recognized as the main characteristics of the existence.

It should be noted that in educational institutions of Galicia, religious subjects were of paramount importance, being one of the main. Being focused on cultivating principles of faith, they contributed to the formation of a holistic religious worldview aimed at keeping a human being from moral decline (Ministry of Religious

Denominations and Public Enlightenment, 1926, pp. 106-107).

During the interwar period the role of religious pedagogy constantly grew in Galicia, which particularly was caused by encyclicals by Pope Pius XI “That Divine Teacher” dated 31/12/1929 and “Chaste Wedlock” dated 31/12/1930 as well as by the operation of the organization Generalny Instytut Akcji Katolickiej formed in 1930 (Jamrózek, 1994, p. 102). The encyclicals facilitated the increase of the influence of Christian religion on building the worldview and character of young people.

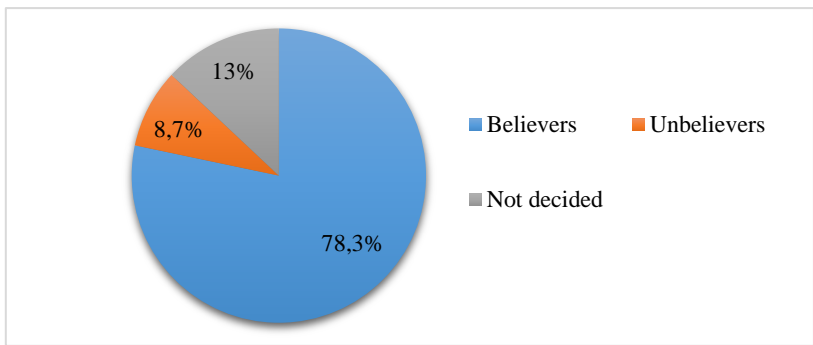
In general, the spread of the reformative ideas of education and upbringing in Galicia stimulated the discussion among local pedagogues of various national groups concerning the role and meaning of religion in the life of both a society and each citizen in particular. In its turn, this provoked the formation of the postulates of religious or Christian pedagogy that aimed at embodiment of the true Christian spirit, building the worldview and moral values of a person and appropriate social behaviour.

Ukrainian and Polish pedagogues of Galicia saw religious education and upbringing as a source of full human development, pointing out that the educational goals formulated here contribute to the full formation of man. Such a system is definitely a bearer of the humanization of the social life since it “looks” at everything from the point of view of love to God and neighbour, and therefore is free from hatred, which is often shared by people, social groups, nations or states (Zakrzewska, 2012, p. 49).

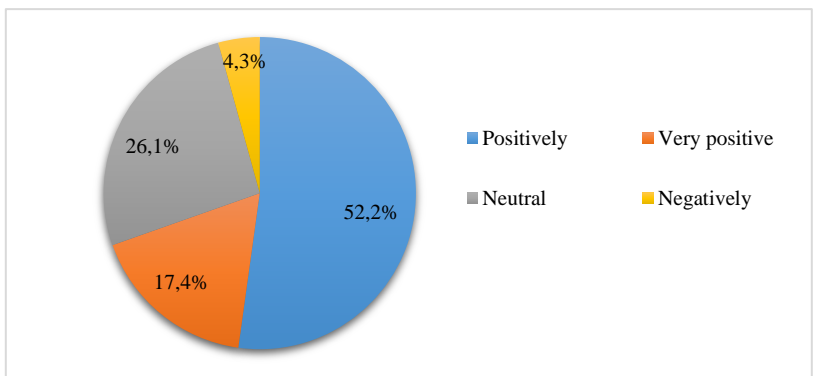
Based on the survey conducted to determine the level of awareness of students of pedagogical specialities of higher education institutions of Ukraine with the problems of religious education of young people in the context of the ideas of reformist pedagogy, we obtained the following results.

78.3% identified themselves as religious people, 8.7% identified themselves as non-religious people, and 13% could not clearly define this question for themselves (Fig. 1).

52.2% of respondents positively assess the influence of religious education on young people in society, 17.4% are very positive, 26.1% are neutral, and 4.3% are negative (Fig. 2).



**Fig. 1.** Results of a survey of students about their religiosity.  
 Source: Authors' calculations based on the survey results.



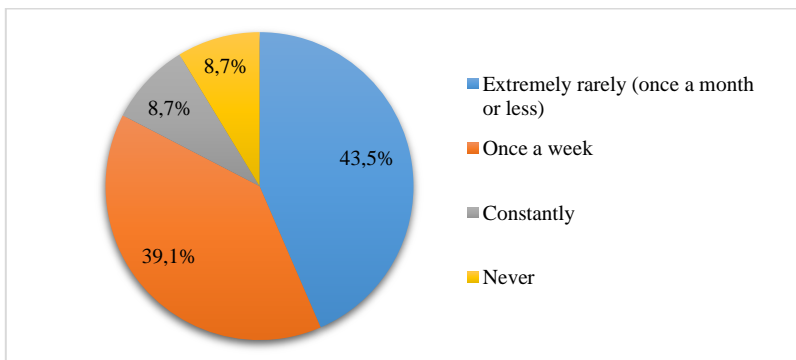
**Fig. 2.** Assessment of the impact of religious education on youth in society.  
 Source: Authors' calculations based on the survey results.

Most of the surveyed students show a certain passivity to the question “How often do you take part in various religious events or practices (worship, prayers, religious gatherings, singing, etc.?)” – 43.5% do it extremely rarely (once a month or less), at the same time 39.1% take part in such events once a week, 8.7% – constantly and 8.7% – never (Fig. 3).

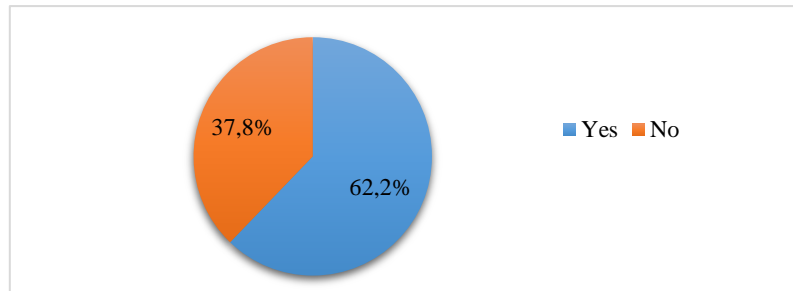
Such a passivity can be explained by the rhythmic and saturated pace of life, active involvement in educational activities, and

participation in various attractions in non-formal education institutions.

The answer to the question “Are you familiar with the currents of reformist pedagogy, in particular, the idea of free personal education, pragmatism, labor school, experimental pedagogy and psychology, the project method, etc.?” is interesting, because students demonstrate a fairly high level of awareness (62.2% said “yes” against 37.8% – “no”), due to actual knowledge of the educational material (Fig. 4).



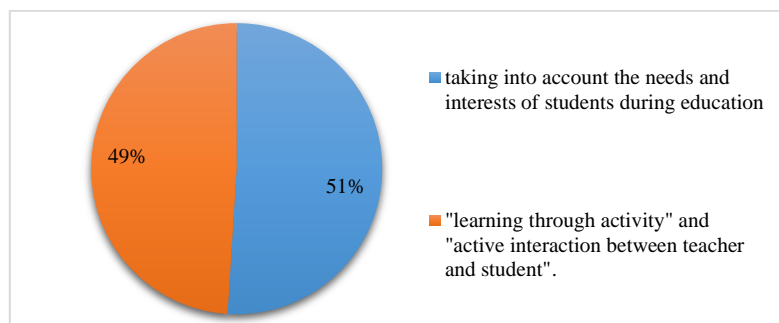
**Fig. 3.** How often do you participate in various religious activities or practices (worship, prayers, religious gatherings, singing, etc.?)  
 Source: Authors' calculations based on the survey results.



**Fig. 4.** Are you familiar with the currents of reformist pedagogy, in particular, the idea of free personality education, pragmatism, labor school, experimental pedagogy and psychology, project method, etc.?  
*Source: Authors' calculations based on the survey results.*

This is confirmed by the answers to the question "Which of the ideas of reformist pedagogy, in your opinion, can be useful for the religious education of young people?". More than 50% of students chose "taking into account the needs and

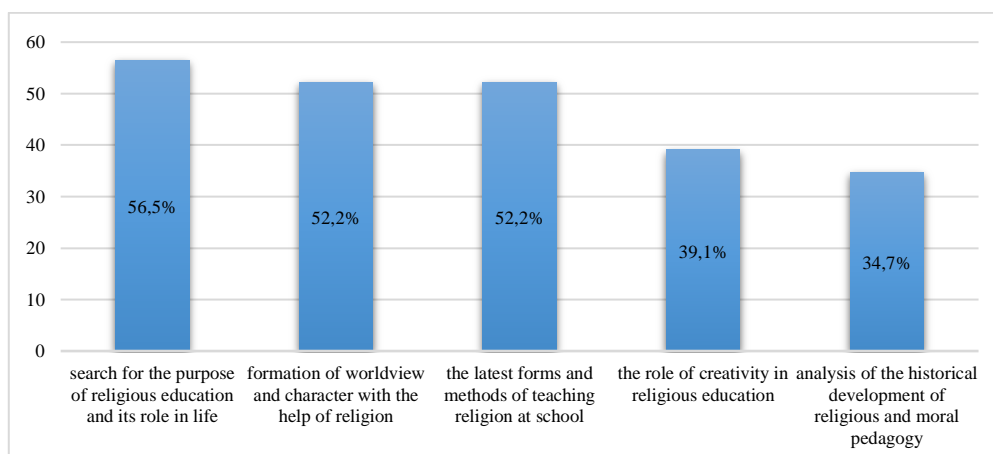
interests of students during education", "civic education" and the idea of free personality education. Definitions for "learning through activity" and "active teacher-student interaction" were somewhat less useful (Fig. 5).



**Fig. 5.** Which of the ideas of reformist pedagogy, in your opinion, can be useful for the religious education of young people?  
*Source: Authors' calculations based on the survey results.*

To the question "Which of the ideas of religious education in the context of reformist pedagogy can be applied in the process of youth religious education?" the majority of respondents noted "the search for the purpose of religious education and its role in life" (56.5%), "the formation of worldview and character with the help of

religion" (52.2%), "the newest forms and methods of teaching religion at school" (52.2%). Slightly fewer respondents chose "the role of creativity in religious education" (39.1%), and "analysis of the historical development of religious and moral pedagogy" (34.7%) (Fig. 6).

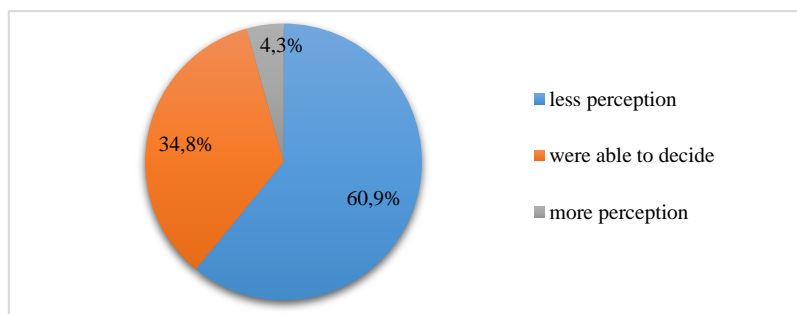


**Fig. 6.** Which of the ideas of religious education in the context of reformist pedagogy can be applied in the process of religious education of youth?  
*Source: Authors' calculations based on the survey results.*



A certain resonance among students was caused by the question “Do you agree with the opinion that today’s youth are more or less receptive to religious education compared to previous generations?”, to which the majority answered

that they have less acceptance (60.9%), the rest could not decide with an answer (34.8%), and only 4.3% answered that they have more acceptance (Fig. 7).

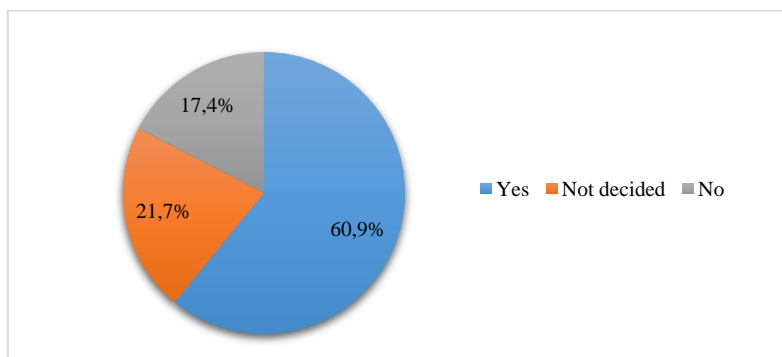


**Fig. 7.** Can we agree with the opinion that today’s youth are more or less receptive to religious education compared to previous generations?

*Source: Authors’ calculations based on the survey results.*

At the same time, young people are aware of the prospects. The absolute majority (60.9%) gave an affirmative answer to the question “Do you

think that religious education should be a mandatory part of education in society?”, 21.7% could not decide, and 17.4% denied it (Fig. 8).



**Fig. 8.** Do you think that religious education should be a mandatory part of education in society?

*Source: Authors’ calculations based on the survey results.*

So, the results of the survey testify to the students’ awareness of the phenomenon of reformist pedagogy of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and its main ideas related to the young people’s religious education, in particular, in the context of taking into account the needs and interests of youth during education, the formation of a worldview and the free education.

Against the background of less acceptance of religious education in modern conditions, the majority of students consider themselves religious people and advocate the inclusion of religion as a mandatory component of public education.

## Conclusions

On the basis of the conducted scientific research, it is possible to determine the following aspects

of the interaction of educational and religious ideas in the context of reformative pedagogy:

- the formation of moral behaviour, worldview and character of the youth, after all, these things are always universal for both educational and religious influences;
- the focus on spiritual aspects of the existence of a person;
- the desire for creativity and constant self-improvement.

These ideas are actively accepted by the modern students, who are mostly familiar with the historical currents of reformist pedagogy, which advocated global changes in the field of educational policy, free access to education, and individual freedom. In the context of religious education, these ideas were harmoniously combined with the postulates of faith and free

personal education, the need to adhere to appropriate norms of behavior and the formation of a broad worldview, deep respect for established traditions and customs with activity and responsibility for one's own behavior.

On the example of the comparative analysis of religious traditions of Galicia of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with its cultural phenomena and educational transformations, openness to new reformative changes (which clearly showed the progressive changes in the field of schooling), one can notice, on the one hand, deep respect for religious customs, formation of spiritual and moral values, and on the other hand, the focus on the activeness and independence of a human together with discipline and faith in God, which generally corresponded to the postulates of reformative pedagogics that emphasized the importance of realization and discovery of human forces and opportunities, humanistic treatment to a child, formation of child's individual and innate abilities.

The results of the research are of direct interest for modern educational practice, as they not only reflect an actual historical and pedagogical problem on the example of one region, but also indicate that religious education of young people can be an important part of general education, which can help young people to fully develop their potential, to realize themselves in modern society and to see the prospects for their own development.

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