

# Teoria da Aprendizagem Desenvolvimental (TAD): diálogo com Bronislav Alexandrovich Zeltserman

*Developmental Learning Theory (DLT):  
an interview with Bronislav Alexandrovich Zeltserman*

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## ABSTRACT

Bronislav Alexandrovich Zeltserman (b. 1947) is the founder and leader of the Riga Group (Latvia). This interview with Zeltserman was conducted between August and November 2022, opening the 1st International Round of Interviews with leading representatives of DLT. More than conventional or pre-formatted questions and answers, this interview turned into a dialogue that lasted almost three months, during which the interviewee was able to thoughtfully reconstruct the whole process of the genesis, development, and consolidation of the four fundamental pillars of DLT in the Republic of Latvia (the Riga Group, the journal *Vestnik*, the Pedagogical Center “Experiment”, and the Innova

## RESUMO

Bronislav Alexandrovich Zeltserman (1947) é o fundador e líder indiscutível do Grupo de Riga (Letônia). A presente entrevista com Zeltserman foi realizada entre agosto e novembro de 2022, por ocasião da abertura do 1º Ciclo Internacional de Entrevistas com os principais representantes da TAD. Mais do que uma entrevista convencional com perguntas prontas e respostas frias, resultou em um diálogo que se estendeu por espaço de quase três meses ao longo dos quais o entrevistado pode reconstruir mentalmente todo o processo de gênese, desenvolvimento e consolidação dos quatro pilares fundamentais da TAD na República da Letônia (o Grupo de Riga, o periódico *Vestnik* o Centro Pedagógico

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School). The way the group harmoniously integrated the assumptions of D. B. Elkonin, V. V. Davidov, V. V. Repkin and co-authors with the foundations of STA-m (Systemic-Thought-Activity methodology), conceived by G. P. Shchedrovitsky and co-authors, laid the groundwork for the birth, in the late 1980s, of a new variant of the psychological and didactic system D. B. Elkonin, and V. V. Davidov.

**Keywords:** Bronislav Alexandrovich Zeltserman. Developmental Learning Theory. Riga Group. Pedagogical Center “Experiment”. STA-methodology.

“Experimentar” e a Escola Innova). O modo como o grupo integrou harmonicamente os pressupostos da TAD, de D. B. Elkonin, V. V. Davidov, V. V. Repkin e colaboradores, com os fundamentos da MAPS (Metodologia da Atividade do Pensamento Sistemico), concebida por G. P. Shchedrovitsky e colaboradores, sentaram as bases para o nascimento, no final da década de 1980, de uma nova variante do sistema psicológico e didático D. B. Elkonin e V. V. Davidov.

**Palavras-chave:** Bronislav Alexandrovich Zeltserman. Teoria da Aprendizagem Desenvolvimental. Grupo de Riga. Centro Pedagógico “Experimentar”. Metodologia da Atividade do Pensamento Sistemico.

## 1 Introduction

This dialogue marks the beginning of the **first International Cycle of Interviews with prominent figures in Developmental Learning Theory**. The cycle aims to connect Brazilian researchers with foreign intellectuals and scientists who were directly involved in developing Developmental Learning and Study Activity theories from 1960 to 2019. These individuals have contributed to the establishment of various alternative psychological and didactic developmental systems, particularly the Elkonin-Davidov-Repkin system, from different fields of work, countries, and cities.

Contact will be facilitated through interviews that explore these theorists' work specifics, the impact of their ideas on consolidating systems and theories, the context in which their work was produced, each theoretical position's specifics, and reflections on their work after many years.

To cover the long development period of the systems and their developmental learning concept, the interview cycle will include representatives of the most diverse proposals that meet the following criteria: (a) be linked to distinct moments, stages, or phases in the history of alternative developmental, psychological, and didactic systems; (b) be linked to different groups and variants within these systems; (c) be linked to various objects and

fields within the theory, such as developmental psychology, educational psychology, and learning methodologies; (d) be linked to important representatives of these systems; (e) be linked to different geographical regions, such as cities, republics, and countries; (f) be linked to current movements for the renewal and continuity of the theory within groups, institutions, cities, republics, and/or countries where they live and/or work; and (g) be an intellectual and researcher with high recognition in Brazilian and foreign academic circles, as evidenced by their extensive scientific production. solid involvement in groups, networks, associations, centers, etc., with recognized national and international prestige.

Interviews will be published in two languages whenever possible (in their original language and in Portuguese). This initiative aims to intensify and consolidate knowledge about Developmental Learning Theory in Brazil and Latin America. Gepedi has played a leading role in this process while strengthening collaborative links with internationally renowned groups and researchers.

The first interview discusses education and developmental learning based on an analysis of the Riga Group (Latvia)'s contributions, as well as those of the "Experimentar" Pedagogical Center and the "Innova" School, from 1987 to 2022. These contributions were reported and critically commented on by their founder and director, Bronislav Alexandrovich Zeltserman. The interview, based on an initial version of 13 questions, was conducted between August 21 and November 16, 2022. Rather than a conventional interview with prepared questions, however, it resulted in a three-month dialogue during which the interviewee could change, add, or remove questions and reconstruct the genesis, development, and consolidation of the three fundamental pillars of Developmental Learning Theory in Latvia: the Riga Group, the Experimentar Pedagogical Center, and the Innova School.

Bronislav Alexandrovich Zeltserman is 75 years old. He was born on March 10, 1947, in Zhytomyr, Ukraine. His family moved to Riga, Latvia,<sup>4</sup> in 1966. He graduated from the Riga Polytechnic Institute in 1971 with a degree in mechanical engineering. He then conducted research and taught at the Faculty of Economics and pursued postgraduate studies in economics, organization, and economic management. He defended his dissertation, "The Problem of Forecasting the Need for Specialist Training," at Moscow State University in 1984.

**Photo:** Bronislav Alexandrovich Zeltserman giving a lecture.



**Source:** Personal archive of Bronislav Alexandrovich Zeltserman.

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<sup>4</sup> The Republic of Latvia (Latvijas Republika, in Latvian) is a small country in northeastern Europe and is one of the three Baltic republics, along with Estonia to the north and Lithuania to the south. With a population of around 2.1 million, Latvia's main city and capital is Riga, with around 700,000 inhabitants. Latvians are Christian, with Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Orthodox Christianity being evenly distributed. The local currency is the lats, and the official language of the country is Latvian. The German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of 1939 culminated in the annexation of Latvia by the Soviet Union on August 5, 1940. In 1989, in the wake of events that led to the end of communism in Eastern Europe, Latvia declared de facto independence on August 21, 1991. Since then, the country has rapidly distanced itself from the political, economic, and sociocultural structures of the former Soviet Union. Note from RVP and AML.

Since 1984, he has worked as an employee of the Methodological Office of the Latvian Ministry of Higher Education. He has served as head of the group on new forms and methods of learning, head of department at the Institute of Developmental Education; and scientific secretary of the Republican Commission on “Education and Training of Personnel” of the Comprehensive Program for Scientific and Technical Progress of the Republic of Latvia.

In 1994, Zeltserman received the qualification of Developmental Education Methodologist in the D. B. Elkonin - V. V. Davidov system. He is the author, editor, and organizer of more than 80 works on educational issues<sup>5</sup>, as well as manuals on new forms and methods of learning. Between 1986 and 1989, he trained as a methodologist and educational games technician. He has participated in the development and organization of more than 30 educational games together with important authors such as G. P. Shchedrovitsky, A. A. Tyukov, and Yu. V. Gromyko and B. Khasan. In 1987, he founded and assumed the scientific direction of the “Experimentar” Pedagogical Center. Since 1994, he has been President of the Board of the Latvian Association “Developmental Learning” and a member of the Presidency of the International Association “Developmental Learning.” Since 1989, he has been the developer and leader of the “Integrated Developmental Education” project at the Pedagogical Center “Experimentar.”

Zeltserman's areas of interest (ZELTSERMAN et al., 2007, 2006, 2002; ZELTSERMAN; ROGALERA, 2002; ZELTSERMAN; NETUNAKHIN, 2002) have included, among others, problems in the development of the Elkonin-Davidov education and learning system; the creation of a comprehensive methodological system for developmental education; forms of play in education; the development of thinking and creativity; the formation of student personality; etc.

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<sup>5</sup> Readers can access a comprehensive list of Bronislav Alexandrovich Zeltserman's publications at the following link: [http://old.experiment.lv/ba/ba\\_publicacii.htm](http://old.experiment.lv/ba/ba_publicacii.htm). Note from RVP and AML.

## 2 Interview with Bronislav Alexandrovich Zeltserman

**Roberto V. Puentes (RVP) and Andréa M. Longarezi (AML):**

Dear Bronislav Alexandrovich Zeltserman, for various reasons, you became the leading exponent of Developmental Learning Theory in Latvia and one of the key architects of preserving and consolidating the International Association for Developmental Learning of the D.B. Elkonin and V.V. Davidov<sup>6</sup> system since its creation in 1994. This was achieved through the research, dissemination, and conservation work of the Riga Group, the Pedagogical Center "Experimentar," and the magazine *Вестник*. Could you first tell us briefly about your entry into the D. B. Elkonin and V. V. Davidov Developmental Learning System?

**Bronislav Alexandrovich Zeltserman (BAZ):** My entry into the D. B. Elkonin and V. V. Davidov Developmental Learning System took quite a long time (cf. Puentes, 2017). Until 1984, I worked at Riga Technical University as part of a research group and as a professor. That year, I presented and defended a dissertation on economics and management in education at Moscow State University and immediately returned to Riga. While in the capital, I was invited to work at the Institute for the Development of Education in Latvia, where I was assigned to lead the group "New Forms and Methods of Learning."

Active and heated discussions about the need for radical education reform began in scientific and pedagogical circles at this time. It became clear that the school's social and technological outcomes did not meet the mid-1980s' requirements. To determine the future of learning methods and forms, our group was formed. Although no one knew what they would have to do or what priority tasks they would have to solve,

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<sup>6</sup> What B. A. Zeltserman identifies throughout his interview with the name System D. B. Elkonin and V. V. Davidov is exactly the same as what we have identified since 2019 as the Elkonin-Davidov-Repkin System within Gepedi – Study and Research Group on Developmental Didactics and Teacher Professionalization (PUENTES; LONGAREZI, 2020).

I realized that we had to start with a thorough analysis of the existing system and the educational processes. At that time, the Ministry of Education had the best library of pedagogy and psychology in the country. All the most up-to-date materials on education came in three languages: Russian, Latvian, and English. During this period, the library became my main workplace. I studied and analyzed the materials, trying to find the foundations on which to build a modern, effective educational system. Although I was an engineer by training, I was not a novice in this field. I had read extensively on pedagogy and psychology, and I had over 10 years of scientific and pedagogical experience at the university. However, I did not like the materials I found in the ministry library. I knew something was missing.

Consequently, I enrolled in the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology at the University of Latvia and got to know all the professors. I was interested in knowing what basic ideas and approaches the university was founded on. I received an answer that would significantly influence all my future activities: "In addition to pedagogy, there is also the psychology of learning. We need to find out which is more important—pedagogy or psychology."

At the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology, we began the seminars obsessed with the idea of reforming education. The first discussion was on the topic, "Pedagogy is not a science." A young teacher from the Liepaja Pedagogical Institute<sup>7</sup> defended this thesis; he would go on to write interesting books on education. We invited the head of the pedagogy department, a doctor of science, to debate.

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<sup>7</sup> The Pedagogical Institute is part of Liepaja University, located in the city of Liepaja (Latvia) and today the largest university in Kurzeme. It was founded in 1945, at the time as a four-year pedagogical school. In 1950, it became the Liepaja Teachers' Institute, in 1954 - the Liepaja Pedagogical Institute, in 1961 - the Liepaja State Pedagogical Institute, and in 1966 the name "Vilis Latsis" was added to the name. In recent times, names and status have also changed. In 1990, the university reverted to being "just" the Liepaja Pedagogical Institute; in 1993, Liepaja Higher Pedagogical School; in 1998, Liepaja Pedagogical Academy. On July 2, 2008, Latvian President Valdis Zatlers proclaimed the law "On the Constitution of Liepaja University," and on July 16 of the same year, it became one of the largest universities in Latvia. Note from RVP and AML.

The first seminar conflict between young, novice teachers and experienced ones ended with my realization that pedagogy was missing something.

An associate professor in the department with a Ph.D. in psychology from Moscow State University said: "Guys, there are actually more interesting studies and research being developed in the field of education at the Moscow State University Faculty of Psychology. They seem more promising to me."

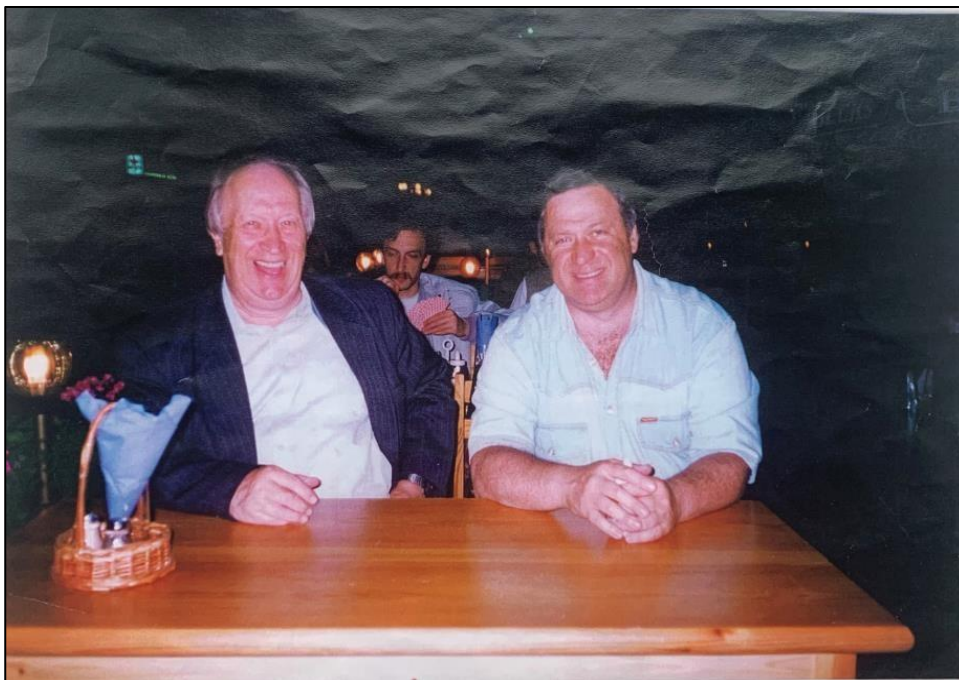
These events led me back to the library, where I read materials not only on pedagogy but also on psychology, management psychology, and developmental and pedagogical psychology. I began to think: Is education a psychological and pedagogical activity, or is it a pedagogical and psychological activity? This is an important distinction between nouns and adjectives in learning. It became clear that there are no convincing works on what is fundamental.

At that time, the shortcomings of higher education were apparent to me, but I had many questions about basic school education, both for myself and for others. We continued to discuss this topic when one of the seminar participants said, "Did you know about the Moscow Methodological Circle? Georgy Petrovich Shchedrovitsky leads this group of thinkers. They consider education to be an integral process." This integrity was visible in the materials of the Moscow Methodological Circle (MMC).

We decided that it would be promising for our Riga seminar to cooperate with this methodological approach. Meanwhile, my interests weren't confined to theoretical discussions, so I went to Moscow State University, spoke with professors, and learned about a unique educational system being implemented. It was called the Elkonin-Davidov Developmental Learning System.

V. V. Davidov fell out of favor in 1982 but was allowed to return to work between 1984 and 1985. Perestroika began<sup>8</sup>, and discussions about the future of the main ideas of Developmental Learning began, some of which were already being used in schools. During Perestroika, new proposals gained support, and conferences and organizational games (OG) began to be held to discuss the problems of new approaches.

**Photo:** V. V. Davidov and B. A. Zeltserman in Riga (Jurmala)



**Source:** Personal archive of Bronislav Alexandrovich Zeltserman

For our group, participating in the JOs became a benchmark. These mass events lasted 9-12 days. Between 150 and 200 leading experts attended them and discussed educational issues in a special format. In 1987, Georgy Petrovich Shchedrovitsky gave a series of lectures in Riga on the formation of the Moscow Methodological Circle (MMC). From that moment on, I began to

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<sup>8</sup> Perestroika was, together with Glasnost, one of the policies introduced in the Soviet Union by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1986. The word Perestroika, which literally means reconstruction, took on the connotation of economic restructuring. This policy ended in 1991. Note from RVP and AML.

cooperate with Shchedrovitsky and other representatives of his MAPS (Methodology of Systemic Thinking Activity) school, as well as with MAPS pedagogy developers (P. G. Shchedrovitsky, Yu. V. Gromyko, S. V. Popov, A. A. Tyukov, B. I. Hasan, and others).

For the next four to five years, alongside discussions and studies, participants in our circle and, later, teachers and students at the Experimental Center took part in several large-scale JO events related to constructing a new education system. From 1988 to 1992, we participated in fundamental exercises, such as:

(1) A new school for the early years of elementary education with V. V. Davidov as the academic client and Yu. Gromyko as head of the game.

(2) Experimentation in education with G. P. Shchedrovitsky as head;

(3) A new school with D. Dneprov, the future Minister of Education, as the client and Yu. Gromyko as head of the game;

(4) Prospects for Education in the Republic of Latvia, with the Latvian Ministry of Education as the client and V. V. Matskevich, B. I. Hasan, and G. M. Breslavos as the game leaders;

(5) "Modern University," with P. G. Shchedrovitsky as head.

These events were attended by leading scientists, developers, specialists, methodologists, and professionals from various fields and levels of education.

Our group participants formed a multifocal idea of the New Education project, on which we worked between 1987 and 1989 as part of the Pedagogical Center "Experiment's" responsibilities. This project allowed us to develop a new understanding of the content and technology of educational activities.

All the extensive material produced was formalized in the "Latvian Rural School" project, which was designed as a boarding school for gifted children. Materials from young scientists and specialists from different cities and countries

were used in creating this project. These individuals participated in discussions and the development of new education in major forums, such as conferences and JO's on educational issues. Some of them later became prominent specialists and doctors of science in their countries.

Due to the enormous amount of work carried out in our project, the most significant place was occupied by: N. Veresov and V. Kudryavtsev from the Venguer Center for Early Childhood Education.

Groups led by: - V. V. Davidov, G. A. Zuckerman, and V. V. Repkin for language - E. Chudinova and E. Vysotskaya for natural science - A. M. Zakharova, E. I. Aleksandrova, S. F. Gorbov, and V. V. Davidov for mathematics. These specialists all contributed to the development of primary and secondary school curricula, teacher training, and professional development.

We would also like to highlight the work of the Psychological and Pedagogical Faculty of Krasnoyarsk University under the guidance of B. Khasan and I. Frumin.

We used the results of discussions on educational problems held by the Riga Methodological Circle (I. Zlotnikov, G. Breslav, V. Matskevich, S. Tanzorov, I. Vatolin, and M. Strozhev) in creating the project. From 1997 to 1999, the idea of a different kind of education took shape, as did our reflections and discussions, which culminated in a project that could be implemented in practice. The project's scientific basis was the work of L.S. Vigotski's followers, particularly V.V. Davidov and G.P. Shchedrovitsky. We, the next generation, had the opportunity to continue the work of our teachers.

After conceiving the project, we designed a longitudinal psychological and pedagogical project called "Experimentar." The first phase ended with the design of the Experimentar Pedagogical Center project and a group of supporters. More importantly, it ended with a deep personal friendship with two great teachers: V. V. Davidov and G. P. Shchedrovitsky.

We maintained a creative, scientific, and deeply personal relationship with both professors until their final days in 1998 and 1994, respectively. These were

individuals who attracted people not only with their high culture, ideas, and projects, but also with their excellent personal qualities. These attracted me as much as their ideas.

**RVP and AML:** Zeltserman, please tell us about the Riga Group and the "Experiment" Center, as well as the most significant events associated with them.

**BAZ:** After conceiving the project on paper, I took on its implementation in 1989. There were several good reasons for this: a well-prepared project, several content carriers, and scientific and methodological support from the authors, V. V. Davidov and G. P. Shchedrovitsky, as well as their students and representatives of two new, consistent trends in the scientific school of L. S. Vigotski.

After registering a design-research structure within a new business organization, we began preparing to launch experimental sites at various educational levels. Over two years, the work was carried out in different directions, especially experimental research at the preschool level. This was considered the first study on child development in Latvia (1989-91). The programs "Development" from the Venguer Center<sup>9</sup> and "Paths" by V. Kudryavtsev, as well as programs developed by group members, served as the basis for this work.

We also undertook the selection, training, and development of teaching staff to work in the new education system. In accordance with the primary school curriculum, we implemented the Elkonin-Davidov Developmental Education System in Latvia based on the Developmental Learning System. In 1992, the Riga

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<sup>9</sup> The Venguer "Development" Center is a private institution for continuing professional education that has been in existence for over 25 years. It was founded in 1992 on the initiative of the famous child psychologist L. A. Wenger (1925-1992). Currently, the Center is engaged in training teachers of preschool educational institutions within the framework of the program "Fundamentals of educational work within the framework of the 'Development' program." People with higher education or secondary specialized education in pedagogy and/or psychology can study there. Upon completion of training, a certificate of professional development is issued. Note from RVP and AML.

Methodological Circle formed a team with methodologically oriented education programs in secondary education based on G. P. Shchedrovitsky's Methodology of Systemic Thinking Activity and P. G. Shchedrovitsky's MAPS pedagogy.

The training and development of teaching staff was carried out in two ways. First, teachers participated in training courses conducted by leading experts and developers of the Developmental Learning System in Kharkiv, such as V. V. Davidov and V. V. Repkin, who are the authors of the courses.

A. Zakharova, E. A. Aleksandrova, etc.). ), and after the creation of the International Association for Developmental Learning (1994) and the re-registration of the International Public Organization Developmental Learning (1996), professional development courses were conducted in Moscow by G. A. Zuckerman, A. B. Vorontsov, V. A. Lvovsky, E. V. Chudinova, E. V. Vysotskaya, S. Gorbov, Yu. Poluyanov, E. A. Aleksandrova, and other co-authors.

**Photo** - Members of the International Association for Developmental Learning (1994).



**Source:** Personal archive of Bronislav Alexandrovich Zeltserman.

In 1989, we enrolled preschoolers aged five or six in the Child Development Studio for the first time. These children formed the first experimental classes in

1991 and 1992, as well as in subsequent years. Subsequently, we began selecting children not only at school readiness age. As we gained experience working with children, the minimum age for admission to the Child Development Studio decreased to two years. Thus, our classes were mainly comprised of students who had completed early childhood education at the "Experimentar" Pedagogical Center.

Since some structures were already functioning successfully by 1990, we began preparing for the start of the pedagogical process in school education. At the same time, our teachers regularly attended Krasnoyarsk University's Pedagogical School, which was then a gymnasium. There, they filmed classes of teachers from the Developmental Learning System and discussed them with the teachers. These lessons became indispensable material for our teachers to consolidate Developmental Learning.

In the mid-1990s, we repeatedly traveled with V. V. Davidov to schools implementing the Developmental Learning system. We observed and analyzed the classes. From 1992 to 1996, we attended the Krasnoyarsk Conference on Developmental Pedagogy annually. V. V. Davidov and P. G. Shchedrovitsky were usually the keynote speakers. We observed, filmed, and analyzed various classes, including disciplinary and interdisciplinary ones. At the conference, we listened to lectures by various students of V. V. Davidov.

**Photo:** Authors of the theory visiting Riga, capital of Latvia.



**Source:** Personal archive of Bronislav Alexandrovich Zeltserman.

Many authors from the Developmental Learning system came to the Center in Riga, where they held open classes with video recording and analysis, as well as classes with teachers and meetings with parents. During the center's formative years, V. V. Repkin (Developmental Learning and Study Activity) and A. K. Dusavitskii (Personality Psychology), among others, visited us and gave courses, lectures, and classes. The open classes were taught by the course authors — V. Levin (Art of Communication), E. I. Eremina (Mathematics and Work in Developmental Learning)<sup>10</sup>, E. A. Aleksandrova, and A. M. Zakharov (author of the mathematics course). N. Veresov conducted the author's program "We Are Earthlings."

<sup>10</sup> The content of this lecture was later published by the "Experimtar" Pedagogical Center in 1997. See references at the end of the interview. Note from RVP and AML.

From 1998 to 2000, with the involvement of the main developers of the Developmental Learning System, V.V. Davidov and G.A. Zuckerman, we conducted three-year training courses for teachers from countries formerly linked to the Soviet Union. These teachers formed the core group who would implement and develop the Elkonin-Davidov Developmental Learning system.

To implement methodologically oriented education, our group's core consisted of members of the Riga Methodological Circle. We have cooperated with them since 1984 and participated in many events to discuss and develop a new approach to education. In addition to their university education in the natural sciences, law, history, and philosophy, our colleagues received independent training in various activities organized by the methodological community.

They participated in various educational games conducted by G. P. Shchedrovitsky and his students (S. V. Popov, Yu. V. Gromyko, and A. A. Tyukov), as well as family games at the School of Cultural Policy and methodological summer schools. These events were designed to discuss and solve various problems in management, law, economics, education, and more.

Thus, the group members developed a shared understanding of the structure of methodological education and of methods for solving substantive problems. They also learned about new learning technologies, methodological tools, and developments in MAPS pedagogy. For secondary education, V. V. Davidov recommended involving teachers of professional subjects, as he assumed they could successfully work with graduates of Developmental Learning programs.

This idea became a reality, and we made it a requirement for secondary school teachers. Since 1991, the development of these groups has enabled us to implement a systematic training program in the first and subsequent years in accordance with the Elkonin-Davidov Developmental Learning System. In the tenth grade, a significant number of students who graduated in 1995 were selected through a competitive process in 1992 for a methodologically oriented learning program. Over time, students in grades one through seven

were prepared to study methodologically oriented subjects, participate in educational games and seminars, and take part in special projects and elective courses.

### Photos - Moments from the Developmental Learning System (2003)



**Source:** Personal archive of Bronislav Alexandrovich Zeltserman.

The developed scientific and methodological basis made it possible to select graduates from the Child Development Studio of the Pedagogical Center for the first experimental class in 1991 and follow them throughout their entire school career until graduation in 2002. In 2002, the first group of students from the experimental class graduated. They studied at the Center from ages 5 to 14, according to a system based on Elkonin-Davidov Developmental Learning and, at the secondary level, on the Methodology of Systemic Thinking Activity theory and practice. We call this Holistic Developmental Education, and we describe it in two collections: "Discovery Workshop" and "Experimental Time."

The main events are: (1) a complete cycle of preschool, school, and training education; (2) teacher training from the perspective of developmental learning (three-year courses), together with authors involved in the system, developers of psychological and pedagogical support, and courses in different subjects (e.g., mathematics, the Russian language, and natural sciences); (3) participation in international research together with authors of the Developmental Learning system; (4) successful participation in international Olympiads and festivals of Developmental Learning schools; and (5) holding our own international festivals that showcase our methodological, theoretical, and practical developments in Developmental Learning and MAPS pedagogy.

The main results of this long-term work are a new type of graduate student and teachers with new skills, such as subjectivity, reflexivity, problem-solving ability, design skills, and teamwork skills.

The most significant professional and personal achievements brought about in professionals through this work are:

- Ten teachers of important subjects completed master's theses at the University of Latvia on topics directly related to the development of the Elkonin-Davidov developmental learning system. One teacher defended a doctoral thesis on the topic "Characteristics of the subject of study activity at different stages of education."

Members of the Center, led by G. A. Zuckerman, participated in a two-year international comparative study entitled "Formation of the Subject of Study Activity."

Between 2008 and 2015, a group of former Center students carried out a series of international projects to study and train youth leaders using the methods and technologies they had learned at the "Experiment" Center.

In addition to the previously mentioned aspects, I would like to highlight the most notable achievements of the primary group members.

Margarita Lvovna Dubina began working with five-year-olds in 1989, teaching them creative thinking, mathematics, and natural sciences from the perspective of Developmental Learning. She completed a chemistry course from this perspective for the secondary school level and was a teacher from 1991 to 2002. She also completed a master's degree in the development of creative thinking and the use of group work technology to solve interdisciplinary problems and form meta-disciplinary skills in extracurricular activities. She has also developed several long-term projects for forming a school community and developing creativity.

Inta Baltina was a mathematics teacher and completed the mathematics course based on Developmental Learning for grades one through twelve. She continues to teach mathematics in these grades. She has also completed a course on preparing preschoolers for mathematics from the perspective of developmental learning. She is pursuing a master's degree to acquire training in teaching mathematics to preschoolers from the perspective of developmental learning.

- Natalya Valentinovna Rogaleva is a Russian teacher who developed the original courses "Speech Development" and "Language Learning (Developmental Learning Program)." She defended her doctoral thesis on "Characteristics of Subject-Oriented Study Activity at Different Stages of Education." She continues to work as the principal of a large public school.

- Irina Nilovna Malyukhina is an English teacher. She teaches educational computer games for preschoolers. She has developed a methodology for conducting educational computer games.

- Nina Mikhailovna Grebenshchikova is a fine arts teacher. She earned a master's degree studying the development of imagination at the elementary and secondary levels.

In addition to all this, we have two teachers from different disciplines who are of the highest academic level. They are V. V. Glukhov in mathematics and S.

N. Vinogradov in physics, who have successfully prepared their students to participate and win in international competitions in these disciplines.

Since 2000, the following group of Developmental Learning teachers has been working at the Center. They received training at the Center itself and carried out practical activities at the school:

- Maria Pekarskaya - Psychologist and teacher who developed a program of cognitive activities for preschoolers and implemented the Developmental Learning program for language training in elementary schools (I and II).

- Margarita Dragile - Teacher of rhythm and theater arts. Developer of the program for creative imagination training and additional education programs. In addition, tutor and developer of programs for training tutors for students.

Among the teachers associated with MAPS pedagogy, we can mention, first, Sergey Tantsorov, who is a methodologist. He has developed and implemented: (1) the author's program on the methodology of law the fundamentals of the organization of thought and activity; (2) the program of organizational and educational games (OOI) for the secondary level; (3) he has developed a methodology for organizing project activities for secondary school students; (4) he has designed and implemented complementary education programs in reflective management.

Second is Mark Strozhev, a methodologist responsible for the author's program on the methodology of the natural sciences, as well as the seminar on the logic of the natural sciences.

Third, Igor Vatolin is a historian responsible for the author's program on the methodology of history and the design of social projects.

Additionally, we recognize the individual achievements of students who have won international tournaments within the debate program.

**RVP and AML:** It is easy to see the long and arduous training journey undertaken by the "Experimentar" Pedagogical Center in Riga over its more than 35 years of history. The journey has been marked by particularities and specificities, which emerged from the Center's decision to integrate Developmental Learning by D. B. Elkonin and V. V. Davidov with Systemic Thinking by P. G. Shchedrovitsky. This has certainly led to the emergence of a variant of Developmental Learning in Riga that is distinct from the variants in Moscow, Kharkiv, and Berlin in different aspects. What do you consider to be the Riga Group's and its Pedagogical Center "Experimentar's" main scientific, academic, and professional contributions to the consolidation and preservation of the Theory of Developmental Learning?

**BAZ:** V. V. Davidov spent many years developing a concept for early elementary school, which was interrupted in 1998 with his death. Only versions of how subsequent stages of education should be organized and implemented remained.

At the Pedagogical Center "Experimentar," these issues were finalized and put into practice. The Elkonin-Davidov school of developmental learning evolved into the school of systemic thinking activity pedagogy and, consequently, into the school of developmental education.

**RVP and AML:** We consider Vestnik, a journal created in 1996 by the Riga Group and its Pedagogical Center, to be a significant contribution to the consolidation of Developmental Learning Theory. To our knowledge, there is no other similar journal within the Elkonin-Davidov psychological and didactic system. Who initiated the creation of the journal, and what do you consider to be its most significant contributions? Why did production of materials cease in 2003?

**BAZ:** The Interregional Association of Elkonin-Davidov Developmental Learning was created in 1994 on the initiative of Vasily Vasilyevich Davidov. Vladimir Vladimirovich Repkin was elected vice president, and they collaborated from the beginning until Vasily Vasilyevich's passing. In 1996,

the association was reestablished as the International Association for Developmental Learning. Up to three hundred people from four countries attended the association's conference, including individuals from Latvia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Russia. Approximately 10% of Russian schools operated according to the Elkonin-Davidov system.

V. V. Davidov himself conceived the idea of creating *Vestnik*, as well as its structure. He also composed the materials and selected the authors of the main sections. The first issue opened with an interview with masters of developmental learning. The first section thus described the history of the system's development. Since V. V. Davidov did not strictly define the structure of the interviews, they turned out to be lively and revealed the personalities of the invited masters.

Vasily Vasilyevich Davidov proposed the second section, which covered the history of scientific research within the Developmental Learning system.

The next section was related to modern scientific development and practice. There was also a separate section on the work of the association itself.

Before his death, Vasily Vasilyevich and we produced five issues. He left behind many important materials related to the history of the system and its scientific development, as well as articles that defined the system's essence and were unfamiliar to most scientists and professionals.

Finally, he proposed this structure, and then the materials were collected. At the Association's annual conferences, which are attended by authors, developers, representatives of various scientific groups, scientists, and representatives of Developmental Learning schools, our issues of the journal *Vestnik* took everyone to countries, regions, and cities. It was important that we had an open section where we invited teachers to publish their work.

Why did the production of materials stop in 2003? The last edition, in 1998, was dedicated to Vasily Davidov's memory. His students spoke and wrote about his importance in our system. Then, we published the materials he left

behind, as well as new materials. However, in early 2000, the situation surrounding the association began to deteriorate for political and organizational reasons.

Scientific competition also played an important role in this process of deterioration because the results of our system's schools were superior to those of ordinary and specialized urban schools. The association began meeting once a year, and relations became strained. Therefore, the last issue of *Vestnik* was published in 2003, after which the journal ceased to exist.

Those research results that could not be published anywhere else were published in Riga and sent to all countries. The issues of this journal are available on our website (<http://old.experiment.lv/>) and hard copies are available at the Association.

**RVP and AML:** Zeltserman, in 2006, the “Innova” Secondary School was created. As stated on the institution's own website, “Innova” is one of the few schools in the European Union based on the concept of Developmental Learning that stands out internationally for the academic results of its students. The school has ranked 2nd and 3rd among Latvian schools in the International Science, Mathematics, and Reading Surveys (PISA and PIRLS).<sup>11</sup> In your opinion, what are the main factors that have enabled the “Innova” school to achieve such educational results?

**BAZ:** Yes, that's right; it is now one of the few schools in Europe with the characteristics you mention.

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<sup>11</sup> PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) is a global network for assessing school performance, first conducted in 2000 and repeated every two years. It is coordinated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development with a view to improving educational policies and outcomes. In turn, PIRLS - Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), is an international study on the reading performance of 4th grade students. It has been conducted every five years since 2001. It was designed to measure children's reading literacy acquisition, to provide a baseline diagnosis for future studies of performance trends, and to collect information on reading learning experiences at home and in elementary school. Note from RVP and AML.

We try to ensure, by all possible means, our regular participation in international comparative studies on the quality of science education and literacy. It was necessary to understand the quality that the correct implementation of the Developmental Learning system provides. In 2015, our school was included in a large sample of schools from 57 countries, and as a result, Innova ranked second in science education and third in literacy in the country. And the main indicators were no worse than those of specialized schools in other countries.

This included students who attended our Preschool Development Studio and who were the first to start studying at a private school, Innova, at the Experimentar Pedagogical Center in 2006.

It is important to note that all the teachers in this class were retrained to teach according to the Developmental Learning concept and have been doing so since the first grade. These educators have worked with students from ages 2 to 9. They prepared the children for the elementary level and understood what was expected of them. As one of our physics teachers said, there was a foundation of Developmental Learning in elementary school, which was reflected in the quality of science and literacy learning outcomes. This combination of preschool from the perspective of Developmental Learning and elementary school is what Davidov did, and our teachers are the main contributors to this approach. Hence, such results emerge.

RVP and AML: Developmental Learning Theory suffered a severe blow after V. V. Davidov's death on March 19, 1998. What do you think were the greatest challenges for this theory and the research groups and centers linked to it after that date? How would you evaluate the work of the Riga Group and the Center during that time? How would you define the current state of Developmental Learning Theory?

BAZ: When reading our works, you would definitely feel that the death of V. V. Davidov was a blow to the developmental learning system. Unfortunately, only V. V. Davidov maintained the integrity of developmental learning theory according

to the Elkonin-Davidov system. Therefore, his departure slowed down the development of a comprehensive theory.

His work remains in the books *Theory of Developmental Learning* (Davidov, 1996) and *Problems of Developmental Learning* (Davidov, 1986), as well as the collection "Approach to Activity in Education" by his students. However, there is no one to maintain the system as it should develop.

In addition, pressure based on the concept of developmental learning began in schools, and consequently, the same pressure began in scientific groups. Previously, we received international, republican, and Open Society Institute<sup>12</sup> grants to develop various aspects of our system. Since 2000, however, funding has decreased, and centers have begun to close. In fact, the work has continued individually. There were still groups in Berlin, Kharkiv, Vietnam, Riga, and Moscow. There were also separate researchers in the US and South America, but these are all initiatives of individuals and groups.

Communication has been extremely difficult since the early 2000s. Here in Latvia, pressure has also been exerted on individuals and on the school as a practical place to implement our educational proposals from a developmental perspective. We have been forced to work harder to preserve the educational process and schooling. We have not carried out any serious development since the end of 2000. They were basically committed to organizing the preservation of the educational process.

The current state of Developmental Learning Theory can be assessed as follows: recently, in connection with the 90th anniversary of Vasily V. Davidov, lectures were held in his honor. Lately, these lectures have featured all those who continue his work.

The pandemic made remote work possible, enabling everyone to participate and making the lectures international. Anyone in the world with something to

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<sup>12</sup> The Open Society Institute is a network of donors founded by business magnate George Soros. The Open Society Foundations provides financial support to civil society groups around the world with the stated goal of promoting justice, education, health, and independent media. Note from RVP and AML.

contribute to the Elkonin and Davidov system speaks at these lectures. Thus, an exchange takes place.

At the same time, this wave of remote interaction has allowed for the formation of new groups and projects. In this sense, the international revival of developmental learning is beginning. It is difficult to predict how effective it will be, but the materials from the last two readings demonstrate that international interaction has a synergistic effect on the development of theory and practice.

They are trying to maintain the same logic as we did with the Vestnik journal. Scientific developments, projects, and practices—successes and problems—are discussed. Thanks to the internet, we can now help each other much more effectively.

If a country sets out to train these people, this system can work. It must be a comprehensive system. I believe that digitization can help us solve several problems related to Developmental Learning that have not been solved until now. And one of the options is to create a hybrid virtual school network for Developmental Education.

**RVP and AML:** Can the Developmental Learning system work in the conditions of a capitalist country, where social and educational problems are different from those faced at the time when the approaches of this theory were created?

**BAZ:** I see no problem in incorporating the Developmental Learning system into a capitalist country. This is possible in any country; there will be no problems if the leaders understand what they will receive as a result: another student and another teacher. So any self-respecting leader will be interested in having such graduates and teachers in their country, and in having such a system work in their country. When D. B. Elkonin and V. V. Davidov developed the Developmental Learning system, they did not think about socialism or capitalism — they thought about personality formation. This system is not directly linked to any specific type of political system.

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