



Female Students of University of Latvia (1919–1920) – An Example of “Eternal Student”

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University of Latvia¹ (further – UL), founded in September 1919, was the largest and most important higher education and research centre in interwar Latvia. The history of UL establishment and the work of faculties have been researched quite widely in Latvian historiography, including detailed reports on various statistical indicators, such as the number and nationality of students, names and degrees of lecturers, as well as the budget indicators of each faculty. However, social portrait of students and their study process have not been analysed.

UL rules determined that the study term was four years, in the Faculty of Medicine – six². However, in the middle and end of the 1920s it became obvious that a significant number of students not only failed to graduate university, but the study process of the majority of students was noticeably delayed. As a result, characterizing aspect of UL work emerged – long-term or so-called phenomenon of “eternal student”. Regardless of the fact that the term “eternal student” is not used in Latvian historiography as characterization of specific student group, as well as such term is rare in the Latvian interwar periodical, however, this ironic term is remarkably accurate speaking about UL students. In this paper the term “eternal student” is used as the description of such student category whose studies lasted longer than the determined rules of UL, even for 10 – 15 years, and in several cases even the entire period of UL work until the Soviet occupation. Although the “eternal student” phenomenon affected both men and women, documents of UL archives reflect the fact that long-term studies were more typical for female

¹ Initially, higher education institution founded in 1919 was named - Higher School of Latvia. In 1923, after Saeima announced approved constitution of university, this school received name – University of Latvia. In historiography name University of Latvian is also used for the period prior university constitution’s promulgation.

² Faculty of Medicine initially adopted curriculum with 5 years studying. However, in 1922 the faculty decided to extend period of study till six years. Students who enrolled before the new curriculum approval could graduate according to five year plan.

students, who constituted a significant proportion of students.³ According to UL activity surveys, in the fall semester of 1919 were registered 685 female students⁴, reflecting the democratic changes – women were given full rights to access higher education regardless of ethnicity, nationality, religion or social origin.⁵

The aim of the paper is to research the main reasons that created the problem of “eternal students”, analysing UL female students’ personal files from Latvian State Historical Archives (LVVA)⁶. The basis of this paper is female students who enrolled in UL in 1919–1920. These students is the most demonstrative example of “eternal student” phenomenon as their study process covered period since foundation of UL till Soviet occupation in 1940.

“Eternal student” – how long?

Women’s (graduated) average study duration was 9.7 years. It is interesting that despite the fact that Faculty of Medicine had one of the most difficult and longest study programs, medicine students were able to finish studies in the shortest time – on average 7.3 years. While in the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy women’s study process continued on average for 12 years. In 1919 the large number of female students enrolled in UL in order to graduate, however, for various reasons they did not complete higher education. Thus, 2nd and 3rd courses were opened in all faculties, which allowed to complete previous studies in two or three years. Study process for these female students also significantly delayed. Separate students managed to graduate only in Soviet or German occupation time. For example, Zelma Ungure got her pharmacy degree only 25 years after starting studies (LVVA 7427-1-203, 12. lp.v.). It should be emphasized that UL rules determined that it was possible to study continuously maximum eight years. Therefore, the long-

³ For example, analysing 650 men, who started their studies in 1919/1920, personal files, results show that male student average study duration was 7.5 years. Moreover, the number of male graduates was higher – 53%. Analysing 610 female student personal files, documents show that the number of graduates was 265 or 43%. However, these numbers cannot be completely precise since all student personal files are not analysed.

⁴ In 1919 there were registered 577 male students. At the end of 1919/1920 there were registered 650 women and 704 men. The number of male students increased significantly as part of soldiers was released from military service.

⁵ For women in the 19th century Russian Empire the only option to get higher education was going abroad, most often to Switzerland or France. In the 20th century in Russian universities centres – Moscow and Saint Petersburg – there were higher women’s courses and other special educational institutions, where they could gain knowledge of university programme without university’s diploma. Russian universities started to enrol women only after collapse of monarchy in 1917, including Riga Polytechnical Institute and Baltic Technical Higher School in Riga founded by German occupation authorities in 1918, though the last one enabled to acquire only technical sciences. Higher School of Latvia that was established by decree of Latvian Socialist Soviet Republic on February 8, 1919 also taught only technical sciences.

⁶ In the research are analysed 610 female students’ personal files.

term studies were characterized by frequent study interruptions. A representative example is personal file of Elfrīda Stepe. In November 1919 she enrolled in the Department of Natural sciences, but documents show that later there were eight study interruptions from 1919 till 1944 (LVVA 7427-1-460, 1. lp., 4. lp., 17. lp.).

Statistics show that out of 1,245 students (both men and women), who enrolled in UL in 1919–1920, in five year period university was graduated by about one third of students or 443 (Rītis 1934, 7. lpp.). Nonetheless, there were a significant number of students who had already left university, however, archive documents evidence that study process of the majority of female students was delayed, by asking for extension of studies or requiring to stay in a particular course for a second year, while some women had stopped their studies for a certain period.

Reasons for study process extension

In study documentations it was officially stated that students were excluded for failing to pass exams for a minimum score or non-payment of tuition fees.⁷ However, students' applications, CV, medical or employment references disclose more detailed reasons of study interruptions or discontinuance. These reasons can be conditionally divided as UL internal problems and students' personal circumstances, although such division is extremely conditional as they interacted and influenced each other.

Internal problems of the University of Latvia

One of the main causes influencing the extension of the study process was faculty programs that were characterized as difficult and complex. Female students complained about the high number of lectures, seminars and practical works, intensive schedule of exams and other examinations, and inadequate lectures in chosen study specializations. A rather common problem was lectures repeating the same content read by various lecturers, such situation created unnecessary numbers of lectures and burden to female students (*Students* 1922, 5).

Successful study process, especially in the first years of UL, was influenced by the shortage of study materials – books, equipment of labs, and lack of premises. For technical sciences students study materials were practically only in Russian and German. As the main language of UL was Latvian, along with the foundation of university there was a need to create terminology for technical sciences, which significantly hindered the study process, as well as possibilities for students to take examinations and to write diploma papers successfully.

Female student personal files reveal that one of the most important factors influencing successful study pace was the knowledge of the Latvian language. A number of faculties found relatively hard to hold lectures in Latvian, especially

⁷ Study documentation often is incomplete. Not all student personal files contain information about reasons of study interruption. Student personal files also indicate that female students temporally interrupted their studies at their own will. Yet such reasons were not indicated in official study documentation.

in departments of technical, natural sciences and law, due to lack of academically educated Latvian-born lecturers. In 1921, it was certified that the Faculty of Mechanics held only 29% lectures in Latvian, Economics and Law – 38%, Engineering – 43%, Chemistry – 45%, but Faculty of Medicine – 52% (BNAA 2012, 119). Thus, it was allowed to hold lectures in another language, foreseeing for professors – a five-year, but for assistant professors – a three-year transition period to hold lectures in Latvian. On the other hand, the requirements for students were more rigorous. There was a clear definition of the principle that lectures in Latvian could be taught in another language only when it was requested by the entire student group (Ibid.). In addition, UL rules determined the submission of candidate's work (diploma work) only in Latvian. Mostly the poor Latvian language knowledge directly influenced non-Latvian female students, especially the large number of Jewish origin women.⁸ A great part of them were Jewish origin students from territory of Latgale, Belarus, and Lithuania and they primarily spoke Yiddish and Russian. Also, all applications of Jewish, German, Polish and Russian women for admission to UL testified the poor Latvian language knowledge. A concrete evidence about difficulty understanding the Latvian language, which led to a prolonged study process, is Jewish student's Lea Rašale request addressed to the Council of the Faculty of Economics and Law in November 1925. Rašale asked to allow to submit candidates work in Russian and explained that with the Latvian language she had familiarized only in University (LVVA 7427-1-328, 4.lp.).

According to UL Dean's Council, students were also excluded due to various offenses – temporally or completely – depending of the severity of the offense. For example, chemistry student Esfira Libermane was excluded because of “indecent behaviour against secretarial staff” (LVVA 7427-1-285, 23.lp). Disciplinary penalty for this student was exclusion from the faculty until the end of the semester. As a serious offense was also considered giving false information about student's personality or previous education. During the first years of UL much attention was paid to this aspect, as various students' personal and educational documents were lost, destroyed or left in other educational institutions as a result of First World War situation and refugee movement. If UL study candidates were not able to present original documents or certified copies, they had to hand in lecture books, student legitimisation card, women's higher course entrance cards, or testimonies from witnesses – what all affirmed attending various higher education institutions. In such cases, most students were excluded completely, not temporarily. For example, Jewish student Ida Horone was excluded from Faculty of Medicine and it was stated that she “lost the right to be a student of UL”, “taking away her lecture book and legitimisation card” (LVVA 7427-1-927, 7.lp.v.).

Personal circumstances of female-students

In addition to the various problems of UL, possibilities for women to complete their studies in determined time were directly affected by students' personal

⁸ There were 123 or 20% Jewish origin students of 610 surveyed female students.

circumstances – social and financial obstacles, family circumstances, women's health, etc.

In 1919/1920 enrolling in university, students had opportunity to mark the most suitable time of attending lectures, that is an important indicator allowing to judge about various circumstances which affected the opportunity to attend studies – job, family. The majority of female students as the most suitable time for lectures marked – afternoons, what indicates that women were busy during most days. Most women were engaged in paid employment, which ensured their daily living and allowed them to pay for their studies, while simultaneously hindered attendance of university. The situation characterizing this was a request by a philology student Leontīne Bērziņa, asking to extend the deadline for examinations:

“From 8 till 16 I am occupied outside university at work, which is a matter of existence for me, that is why I cannot attend the lectures and seminars held by the Romanesque department at that time, without which it is not possible to finish department.” (LVVA 7427-1238, 14.lp.)

Study documentations reveal that in most cases the administration of the faculties tried to help students by extending the deadline for passing exams or submission of candidate's work. However, such assurance to each student was shown maximum one or two times.

Female students often supported not only themselves, but also their family members, for such reasons women were forced to seek additional job. For example, a medical student Mira Lahoviča in 1922 asked to leave her in 3rd course for the second year because she was not able to complete all the required examinations. She wrote that “in order to be able to ensure livelihood to myself and my sick father, I work at school, where I am employed for a half day and I give private lessons outside school.” (LVVA 7427-1-616, 2.lp.) Work influenced not only the possibilities to attend lectures and to take examinations but also the process of writing a candidate's work. Many female students pointed out that they did not have enough time for the process of writing candidate's work, to collect materials, visit libraries and archives. An example is history student Minna Miķelsone, who repeatedly asked to extend the term of submitting a candidate's work: “For my candidate's work I can only use materials from state archive. Since the archive is open until 3 pm, then I as a teacher can work there 2-3 times a week for 1.5 hours.” (LVVA 7427-1-2232, 14.lp.)

Despite the fact that job enabled them to pay for studies, large proportion of female students repeatedly pointed out to the difficult material conditions and asked to be exempted from their tuition fees or to extend payment deadline. Among female students there were also such who did not work. Some of them were supported financially by parents, husbands or other relatives. Difficult economical situation in Latvia influenced women's opportunities to find job, which was the widespread social phenomenon in post-war circumstances. A student Milda Kapele, enrolling Faculty of Medicine, wrote: “I have been without any occupation already for a half year, and my small stock has been eaten up by heavy illness <...>” (LVVA

7427-1-1198, 3.lp.). Further she pointed to the fact that she had no close relatives, who could support her, because her father was dead, while “mother-widow is also unemployed and without source of profit.” (Ibid., 3.lp.). Women were more likely to be fired. The involvement of almost all men in military service and the huge number of victims after start of the First World War had tremendous impact on the demographic situation and determined emphasizing social role of women in post-war Latvia and widened the opportunities for women to work. However, women were still seen as less valuable workforce (even for women smaller salary could be paid). The situation in the post-war Latvia labour market was also exacerbated by demobilized soldiers who “returned home and did not find vacancies, tried to get them back.” (SSK 2014, 223). This was particularly seen in public and municipality administration, where a significant number of females and also female students were employed. The situation is perfectly described by the letter of the prefect of Riga city Janis Dambekalns to the Latvian Women’s Assistance Corps in December 1919:

“For reasons of economy, Ministry demands that I need to decrease the number of police officials subordinated to me, therefore, on 1st January, 12 officials-females must be dismissed from police administration. In January the issuance of Latvian passports will end and approximately 70 temporally hired women will be fired.” (LSPK 2013, 57).

Despite the fact that in Latvian legislature the law which required women to give up their jobs in certain sectors in order to release workplace for war veterans⁹ was not accepted, however, in press quite often there were calls for women to leave positions in state institutions for the benefit of soldiers.

The poor financial obstacles and working students were a topic in the press in the post-war Latvia. For example, in 1923 newspaper “Students” observed that “students or female students are forced foremost to lead tough, almost insanely killing fight for daily bread and only after think about studies.” (*Students* 1923, 5). American journalist Nellie Gardner in 1922 visited Riga and observed typical student life scene. Young students and female students were often forced to ask parents, who were mostly poor farmers, to take food from home (*Dzīves ainas Rīgā* 2014, 121). Female personal files also affirm that due to poor material circumstances, students were dependent on parental support. Archive documents reveal that female students were often forced to go back to parents’ home in the countryside, thus interrupting their studies for a certain period. A student Austra Ozola asked to accept her again in Faculty of Medicine in 1922, explaining that “because of extremely difficult material situation, I was forced to spend last two years outside Riga at my parents’ home.” (LVVA 7427-1-321, 8.lp.)

⁹ Such law was adopted in Austria in 1919. At the end of 1920’s and 1930’s with the escalation of World Economic Crisis, in Latvia part of society encouraged to fire one of spouses if they both worked in state administration. Obviously such decision would be aimed at women as they earned a smaller salary. (*Seksualitāte un sociālā kontrole Latvijā 1914-1939*, 223.-232. lpp.)

Study process was also prolonged due to different cases involving tuition fees. Elza Jansone – a student of Department of Chemistry, for example, due to lack of time, gave lecture money to a doorman (personality of doorman was not specified) with a request to pay for her. The doorman stole the money and the student was excluded from university on January 1923 because of the non-payment of tuition fees (LVVA 7427-1-1218, 12.lp.). Such decision meant that women could ask to be accepted in UL only in the next semester.

Some of the most common reasons for extensions of the study process were different family circumstances of female students – pregnancy, raising children, illnesses of relatives, husband's inability to work, etc. Study documentations show that absolute majority of women were unmarried when they enrolled in UL. However, in the next few years, female students established families. Often, raising children was women's responsibility, and this was the most common reason why female students temporally stopped their education at university. Quite common situation was that women interrupted their studies in order to support their families thus allowing their husbands to study. Perhaps, it confirms that men had more opportunities to find job, so men's education was priority.

Intense lifestyle inevitably affected health of female students. Spreading of various diseases (for example, typhoid) also had negative consequences in the territory of Latvia. Although most of the students' personal files do not contain detailed information on the characteristics of the diseases, a considerable number of personal files allow to conclude that among students the most widespread were different types of infectious diseases – influenza, pleurisy, tuberculosis, various inflammations. It should be noted that a significant number of students suffered from various nervous disorders. Female students themselves considered their nervous disorders as the consequences of work and intensive studies, although there can be found more personalized explanations, such as death of parents, divorce, even “unlucky marriage with husband alcoholic” (LVVA 7427-1-1135, 17.lp.). Shortly after enrolling UL, a four-year-old daughter of Emma Vitenberga-Trauberga was killed by exploding grenade shiver during the Latvian War of Independence. This tragic event was not so easily forgettable that the studies were stopped and continued again and again (Emmas Lieknas 2015, 63). If female students had nervous disorders, doctors recommended to rest and leave university at least for half a year. It should be noted that illness of female students affected by hard studies and job promoted certain discussion among society. However, such discussion was not updated in the aspect of “eternal student” problem, asking solutions for this situation, but they highlighted traditional beliefs about the role of women in society. Traditional and conservative views about the role of women in society and family, which were typical of the period before First World War, were still popular in Latvian society. Due to the demographic situation caused by the huge loss of the population during the war, there was emphasized women's role as mother, which was not compatible to student's and socially active woman's lifestyle.

Solution of “eternal student” problem

Long-term or “eternal student” problem initiated discussion in public. Students and lecturers themselves expressed their opinions and called to reform study curriculum. Mostly, these were requirements to balance the number of lectures, seminars and practical works per semester, or to cross out less relevant lectures for specific study curriculum. In some cases it was suggested to change the time of lectures – one semester in the mornings, the second semester – in the evenings, it could at least partially facilitate the possibilities of working students to attend lectures (*Students* 1922, 5). During the interwar period, all UL departments and their programs experienced a number of reorganizations. This indicated that the administration of UL was willing to find optimal solutions to put into effect successful study process although they did not give completely satisfactory results.¹⁰

Opinions about “eternal students” were also expressed by society. It was already mentioned that in public the concerns about difficult financial circumstances of students were discussed, as well as their tense lifestyle combining job and studies, what in general delayed graduation of UL. For example, in 1927 one reader observed that: “Students almost all time are busy outside University, of course, it is caused by our economic conditions, but it had and will have negative influence to academic life if students disperse forces in everyday life for the sake of their existence.” (*Universitāte svētkos* 1927, 2). However, criticism coming from readers was important as well, that study process takes more time than expected because students do not dedicate enough time for studying. Critical readers quite often assumed that among students there was lot of drinking and entertainments, rather than serious studying, that was the source of concern, because long-term students were a burden for taxpayers.

UL was an autonomous institution, but its budget was partly financed by the state. Thus, the problems of UL promoted debates among the Saeima deputies. In the middle of the 1920’s, the deputies found that the number of UL’s graduates was extremely small, creating the lack of specialists in various sectors of national importance.¹¹ At the same time, the debates roused contemplations on the enormous number of students that caused burden for a state budget. Moreover, the students whose study process was extended, only increased the state’s financial expenses. The debates were characterized by the worries expressed by the deputy Kārlis Dēķēns in 1925: “<...> university, however, does not give as many employees as we need and together with one graduate university is left by 5 non-graduates.

¹⁰ Administration of UL admitted the problem of long-term students. Yet, the seemingly small number of graduates (that comprised on average 30% during interwar period) was not considered to be a significant problem, but characteristic situation for all universities.

¹¹ Until the late 1920’s, the lack of middle school teachers was often recognized as the most significant problem. Despite the fact that teachers in Latvia were trained in various seminars and institutes, yet, the law defined that a secondary school teacher could be only a person with higher education obtained in the University of Latvia.

Also, those who graduate will be attending university on average for 6 – 7 years. How much does one graduate cost for us?”(LRS 1925, 639. sleja). Subsequently, Dēķēns predicted that in the near future a university student will “cost about one million rubles or more.” (Ibid.)

In order to solve students’ financial problems, that was the cause of “eternal student” problem, since the establishment of UL, various groups of students were exempted from tuition fees. First, such advantages were granted to the members of the Latvian Independence War – full exemption from tuition fees for one year to volunteers, and half of tuition fees for one year to mobilized ones. For female students it was relatively difficult to obtain state or UL granted financial help. In addition, scholarships (loans) which were granted by Culture Capital Foundation, and which had to be repaid within five years after graduation, were primarily given to members of the Latvian Independence War. Besides, it was pointed out that the number of scholarships was limited, and the process of obtaining them was complicated. For example, students were not always able to provide necessary documents, including references on family and property conditions (*Studentu palīdzības kase* 1925, 122).

Support for students was also provided with various donations. For example, by the help of Young Men Christian Association, Young Women Christian Association, American Relief Administration, American Red Cross Latvian students were provided with clothing, food, books, etc. (ASVJKS 2009, 31-62).

Students themselves also formed various types of organizations for the purpose to provide material support to students. Such organization, for instance, was Jewish Aid Organization. Similar organizations were also organised for Latvian, German, Russian and Lithuanian students.

In general, it should be acknowledged that different financial and material assistance for students was temporary and could not completely solve students’ financial problems due to which students could not devote full time for studying.

Conclusions

University of Latvia, before the Second World War, became the largest and most notable higher education and research centre in interwar Latvia, educating specialists of natural sciences, humanities and technical sciences, and that was an important contribution to the economic and cultural development of the new Latvian state.

Nonetheless, the work of university was characterized by several major problems, including long-term students. The problem of “eternal students” vividly portrays personal files of students who enrolled in UL in 1919/1920. Personal files reveal a significant number of cases when study processes lasted for more than a decade and even continued from the foundation of UL until the end of its existence, that is, until the Soviet occupation in 1940, when the university was renamed as the State University of Latvia. Students’ personal files also show that phenomenon of

“eternal student” arose as a particular problem among female students, for whom studies at UL was the first opportunity to study at university in the territory of Latvia. Extended study processes for women were characterized by frequent study interruptions due to various reasons. Successful study progress was interfered by the lack of UL premises, shortage of study materials, lack of academically educated Latvian-born lecturers, Latvian language skills (these reasons were especially characteristic in the early years of UL), difficult schedule of lectures and seminars, high tuition fees. Female students’ personal files also give an insight about the impact on studies by different external obstacles. In addition to the impact of different family circumstances, women’s health issues and social problems, as one of the most important female students’ problems was the question of employment. Job prevented to attend lectures while at the same time low payment prevented to pay successfully tuition fees. Moreover, women were more likely to be unemployed because preference was given to male workforce.

The press of that time, although it touched the question of “eternal student” problem, highlighted all students generally, without distinguishing neither male nor female students. Yet society raised issue considering frequent illness of female students. As a result, there was emphasized female students’ inability to be healthy mothers who could give birth to healthy children.

To sum up, the number of female students remained high throughout the interwar period. It showed that women gradually understood the importance of education for achieving political, mental and financial independence. Nonetheless the example of “eternal students” shows that the social and economic difficulties of everyday life in the post-war Latvian society significantly influenced women. This proves that female students and women in general remained one of the most socially vulnerable part of society, as a result, study processes of female students lasted for more than a decade.

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Zane Rozīte

Latvijos universiteto studentēs (1919–1920) – „amžinosios studentēs“ atvejis

S a n t r a u k a

Pagrindinēs sąvokos: *studentē, Latvijos universitetas, „amžinasis studentas“, studiju procesas, socialinēs aplinkybēs.*

Tarpukario laikotarpī Latvijos universitētai (LU) iškilo divi pagrindinēs problemas: mažas absolventų skaičius ir vadinamosios „amžinosios studentės“, t. y. studentės, kurių studijų procesas dažnai tęsėsi daugiau nei dešimtmetį. Remiantis LU taisyklėmis, studijų trukmė buvo ketveri metai, Medicinos fakultete – šešeri. Moterų (absolvenčių) vidutinė

studijų trukmė buvo 9,7 metai. Tik nedaugeliui studenčių sovietmečiu ar vokiečių okupacijos metais pavykdavo baigti studijas. LU taisyklės nurodė, kad nuolatinės studijos galėjo tęstis ne ilgiau kaip aštuonerius metus, todėl studijos būdavo dažnai pertraukiamos.

Pateisinamos studijų pertraukimo priežastys, nurodomos oficialiuose studijų dokumentuose, buvo neišlaikytas egzaminas ar nesumokėtas mokestis už studijas. Tačiau studentų pateikti prašymai, gyvenimo aprašymai, medicininiai dokumentai (išrašai, pažymos) atskleidė išsamesnes studijų nutraukimo priežastis. Šios priežastys gali būti priskiriamos prie LU vidinių problemų (patalpų, studijų medžiagos trūkumas, nepalankus paskaitų ir seminarų grafikas, dideli mokesčiai už studijas). Latvių kalbos mokėjimas taip pat darė nemažai įtakos studijų procesui. Didžioji dalis žydų kilmės studenčių buvo iš Latgalos, Baltarusijos ir Lietuvos – taigi jos kalbėjo jidiš ir rusų kalbomis, o LU taisyklės nurodė, kad paskaitų dėstymo ir baigiamąjo darbo kalba turi būti latvių.

Studijoms įtakos turėjo ir asmeninės priežastys. Dauguma studenčių buvo priverstos dirbti, kad galėtų užsitikrinti pragyvenimo šaltinį ir mokėti už studijas. Užimtumas neleido lankyti paskaitų, laiku pateikti baigiamųjų darbų. Nemažai studenčių buvo mokytojos ar pareigūnės – būtent šių profesijų atstovės gaudavo nuolatinį, nors ir nedidelį, atlyginimą, todėl joms buvo sudėtinga mokėti už studijas. Šaltiniai dažnai rodo, kad studentės dėl prastų materialinių sąlygų ar norėdamos išgyventi buvo priverstos vykti į kaimą – dėl to kurį laiką turėdavo nutraukti studijas.

Studijų procesą veikė įvairios šeimyninės aplinkybės – nėštumas, vaiko auginimas, giminaičio liga ar mirtis ir kt. Darbo ir intensyvių studijų derinimas darė įtaką studenčių sveikatai. Moterys dažniausiai kentėjo nuo infekcinių ligų – gripo, tuberkuliozės, pleurito, įvairių uždegimų. Ankstyvuojū LU gyvavimo laikotarpiu pokario Latvijoje ligas sukeldavo sunkios socialinės sąlygos. Nemažai studenčių patyrė nervinį sutrikimą: pačių studenčių manymu, tai buvo intensyvių studijų ir darbo pasekmė. Dokumentuose pateikiama ir subjektyvių priežasčių, pvz., tėvų mirtis, santuokos nutraukimas. „Amžinosios studentės“ reiškinys buvo diskusijų tema visuomenėje, spaudoje ir tarp Saeimas deputatų, išreiškusių susirūpinimą dėl LU biudžeto, bevaisių pastangų išlaikyti daug metų besimokančias studentes, raginusių nustatyti griežtesnius studentų priėmimo kriterijus.

Zane Rozīte

Female Students of University of Latvia (1919–1920) – An Example of “Eternal Student”

S u m m a r y

Keywords: *female students, University of Latvia, “eternal student”, study process, social circumstances.*

University of Latvia in the interwar period was characterized by two major problems – the low number of graduates and the so-called “eternal students” – students whose study process often continued for more than a decade. UL rules determined that the study term was four years, in the Faculty of Medicine – six. Women’s (graduated) average study

duration was 9.7 years. Separate students managed to graduate only in Soviet or German occupation time. UL rules determined, that to study continuously was allowed maximum eight years, thus studies were characterized by frequent interruptions of studies.

In official study documentations study interruptions were justified by failing to pass exams for a minimum grade or non-payment of tuition fees. However, students' applications, CV, medical or employment references disclose more detailed reasons of study interruptions. These reasons can be conditionally divided as UL internal problems (the lack of UL premises, shortage of study materials, difficult schedule of lectures and seminars, high tuition fees). A significant proportion of female students was affected by the knowledge of the Latvian language. A great part of them were Jewish origin students from the territory of Latgale, Belarus and Lithuania, and who primarily spoke Yiddish and Russian. UL rules determined that the language of delivered lectures and candidate's work is Latvian.

Female students often were affected by different personal circumstances. The majority of them were forced to work in order to be able to secure livelihood and to pay for their studies. Employment did not allow to attend lectures, take exams, and submit candidates' works in time. Large proportion of female students were teachers or officials – professions that provided permanent but small salary, as a result it was difficult to pay for studies. Sources often evidence that students due to poor material circumstances were forced to go to the countryside, thus interrupting their studies for a certain period of time.

Study process was also influenced by various family circumstances – pregnancy, parenting, illness or death of relative, etc. Harmonizing job with intensive studies also affected female students' health. Women mostly were suffering from various infectious diseases – flu, tuberculosis, pleurisy, various inflammations. In the early period of UL, illnesses were caused by difficult social conditions in post-war Latvia. A significant number of female students suffered from various nervous ailments, and as students themselves explained, they were a result of intensive studies and job. However, documents show some more personal explanations as parent death or divorce. The “eternal student” phenomenon was the subject of discussion in society, the press as well as among Saeima's deputies who expressed concerns about UL budget, its useless efforts maintaining long-time students, and called to define stricter criteria for students' admission to studies.

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