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## The Hanseatic League and Education - A Neglected Chapter in European and German History

**Abstract:** The focus of this article is on the connection between education and the Hanseatic League, a topic largely neglected in educational literature, although the qualification needs of Hanseatic merchants had a remarkable influence on the development of German and European education. The Hanseatic League as a network between merchant families, friends and trading partners, its temporal limitation from about the 12th to the 17th century, its spatial expansion, its offices at home and abroad as well as its trading goods are discussed in detail.

The main part of the article is dedicated to education. The general history of education in the Middle Ages cannot be separated from the specific history of merchant education. However, it can be stated that both strands of development have mutually fertilized each other. Of particular interest for today's educational processes is the importance of "learning abroad" to learn foreign languages and get to know foreign cultures, as well as the "learning by doing" that characterized the education of merchants in the Middle Ages. Since the Hanseatic League has been misused in the field of education for political ideologization over the past two centuries, a brief overview of the reception of the Hanseatic League in the history of education is appropriate. The topic is rounded off by emphasizing the importance of the European Hanseatic Museum in Lübeck, founded in 2015, for education today.

**Keywords:** Hanseatic League, Education in the Hanseatic League, Merchant education in the Middle Ages, Learning abroad, Network, European Hanseatic Museum Lübeck.

**摘要** (Olga Graumann & Sören Affeldt: 汉萨同盟和教育 --- 在欧洲和德国历史上被忽略的一章): 本文的重点是关于教育与汉萨同盟之间的联系。尽管汉萨同盟商人的技能需求已对德国和欧洲的大众教育发展产生了显著影响,但其文献在教育文献中却被广泛忽略。

首先,将汉萨同盟作为商人家庭,朋友和贸易伙伴之间的一种网络进行更详细的说明。在这个网络上,其从12到17世纪的时间限制,空间扩展,国内外办事处以及商品之间进行互动。

本文的主要部分侧重于教育。中世纪的一般教育史不能与特殊的商业教育史分开。但是可以明确的是,这两条发展链相互滋养。对于当今的教育过程而言,首先令人感兴趣的是“海外教学”对于学习外语和了解外国文化以及“做中学”的重要性,这是中世纪商业教育的一大特征。

由于汉萨同盟在近二百年的教育领域中被滥用为政治意识形态,因此,简要概述一下汉萨同盟在教育史上被接受的情况。通过强调于2015年在吕贝克成立的欧洲汉萨同盟博物馆对当今教育的重要性来结束这一主题。

**关键词:** 汉萨同盟, 汉萨同盟的教育, 中世纪的商业教育, 海外教学, 网络, 吕贝克欧洲汉萨同盟博物馆。

**摘要** (Olga Graumann & Sören Affeldt: 漢薩同盟和教育 --- 在歐洲和德國歷史上被忽略的一章): 本文的重點是關於教育與漢薩同盟之間的聯繫。儘管漢薩同盟商人的技能需求已對德國和歐洲的大眾教育發展產生了顯著影響,但其文獻在教育文獻中卻被廣泛忽略。

首先,將漢薩同盟作為商人家庭,朋友和貿易夥伴之間的一種網絡進行更詳細的說明。在這個網絡上,其從12到17世紀的時間限制,空間擴展,國內外辦事處以及商品之間進行互動。

本文的主要部分側重於教育。中世紀的一般教育史不能與特殊的商業教育史分開。但是可以明確的是,這兩條發展鏈相互滋養。對於當今的教育過程而言,首先令人感興趣的是“海外教學”對於學習外語和了解外國文化以及“做中學”的重要性,這是中世紀商業教育的一大特徵。

由於漢薩同盟在近二百年的教育領域中被濫用為政治意識形態,因此,簡要概述一下漢薩同盟在教育史上被接受的情況。通過強調於2015年在呂貝克成立的歐洲漢薩同盟博物館對當今教育的重要性來結束這一主題。

**關鍵詞:** 漢薩同盟, 漢薩同盟的教育, 中世紀的商業教育, 海外教學, 網絡, 呂貝克歐洲漢

**Zusammenfassung** (Olga Graumann & Sören Affeldt: *Hanse und Bildung – Ein vernachlässigtes Kapitel in der europäischen und deutschen Geschichte*): Der Schwerpunkt dieses Artikels liegt auf der Verbindung zwischen Bildung und Hanse, einer in der pädagogischen Literatur weitgehend unbeachteten Thematik, obgleich die Qualifikationsbedürfnisse der hansischen Kaufleute die Entwicklung der deutschen und europäischen Volksbildung bemerkenswert beeinflusst haben.

Zunächst wird näher auf die Hanse als ein Netzwerk zwischen Kaufmannsfamilien, Freunden und Handelspartnern, auf ihre zeitliche Eingrenzung von etwa dem 12. bis 17. Jahrhundert, ihre räumliche Ausbreitung, die Kontore im In- und Ausland sowie die Handelsgüter eingegangen.

Der Hauptteil des Artikels ist der Bildung gewidmet. Die allgemeine Geschichte der Bildung im Mittelalter lässt sich nicht von der speziellen Geschichte der Kaufmannsbildung trennen. Es kann jedoch festgehalten werden, dass sich beide Entwicklungsstränge gegenseitig befruchtet haben. Interessant für heutige Bildungsprozesse ist vor allem die Bedeutung der „Auslandslehre“ für das Erlernen von Fremdsprachen und das Kennenlernen fremder Kulturen wie auch das „learning by doing“, das die Kaufmannsbildung im Mittelalter auszeichnet.

Da die Hanse in den letzten zwei Jahrhunderten im Bildungsbereich für politische Ideologisierungen missbraucht wurde, bietet sich ein kurzer Überblick über die Rezeption der Hanse in der Bildungsgeschichte an. Abgerundet wird die Thematik durch die Betonung der Bedeutung des 2015 gegründeten Europäischen Hansemuseums in Lübeck für die Bildung heute.

**Schlüsselwörter:** Hanse, Bildung in der Hanse, Kaufmannsbildung im Mittelalter, Auslandslehre, Netzwerk, Europäisches Hansemuseum Lübeck.

**Резюме** (Ольга Грауманн, Зерен Аффе льдт :Ганза и образование – забытая глава в европейской и немецкой истории): Данная статья фокусирует внимание на теме образования в период существования Ганзейского союза – аспекте, который в педагогическом дискурсе по большому счету оставался за рамками научных исследований, хотя квалификационные потребности ганзейских купцов в значительной мере отражали развитие немецкого и всего европейского народного образования. В начале работы подробно рассматриваются «сетевая» структура Ганзы, включавшая купеческие семьи, друзей и торговых партнеров, хронология существования Союза, датируемая 12-17 вв., его пространственные границы, местные и зарубежные конторы, предметы торговли. Центральное место в статье занимает проблема образования. Обосновывается, почему историю образования в Средневековье следует рассматривать вкупе с историей образования, которое получали купцы Ганзы. Необходимо подчеркнуть, что такой вектор развития был взаимовыгодным. Для современной образовательной парадигмы прежде всего были бы интересны вопросы обучения за границей, прежде всего в плане изучения иностранных языков, знакомства с «иными» ментальностями, а также то, что сейчас принято называть «обучение через деятельность» - этот принцип как раз активно использовался при обучении купцов в Средние века. Поскольку в последние два столетия в образовательном дискурсе роль Ганзы идеологизировалась, авторы посчитали необходимым кратко остановиться на осмыслении данного феномена в истории образования. Рассмотрение заявленной тематики завершается указанием на значимость для современного образования открытого в 2015 году Европейского музея Ганзы в Любеке.

**Ключевые слова:** Ганза, образование в Ганзейском союзе, обучение купцов в Средневековье, обучение за границей, сетевое взаимодействие, Европейский музей Ганзы в Любеке

## Introduction

The development of education in the context of the "Hanseatic League" is on the whole not explicitly considered in German pedagogical literature, it is not mentioned in the general literature on educational history or, if so, only in a few sentences. In the area of vocational education and training, on the other hand - especially in the training of merchants - at least some tracts also deal with its development during the Hanseatic era (see Bruchhäuser, 1989, to whom we are indebted and who is widely used as a source in the following).

The development of education in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in general, of course, has long been comprehensively researched in the history of school. However, the focus of this article is on the connection between the Hanseatic League and the development of education during the time of its existence. Education and the Hanseatic League can be viewed both in terms of the development of (school) education and from a socio-historical perspective. Methodologically, however, this article can only be a social or educational-historical sketch that examines social and school-historical factors - in this case, the acquisition of knowledge and skills within the framework of the Hanseatic League.

We are talking about a period from the middle of the 12th c. to the middle of the 17th c., a time in which domestic and foreign trade in various goods was constantly developing and thus increasingly demanding more education in all areas with respect to the merchants. Social conditions brought about independent commercial educational structures in the Middle Ages and commercial schools, citizen schools and, lastly, secondary modern schools developed from this (Keck, 1999).

Unfortunately, in recent decades, the focus of scientific discussion in educational science has increasingly been less on history. Bruchhäuser argues that historical educational research is in decline and warns that educational research needs historical content in order to be anchored in school and university curricula as well (Bruchhäuser, 2010, p. 37), because socio-historical analyses in particular provide aids to understanding, interpretation and orientation for the constructive handling of current challenges (Greinert, 2010, p. 115). Taking a closer look at the connections between trade, business and (school) education in the Hanseatic era is particularly interesting in view of growing nationalism, because it shows how cosmopolitan the long-distance traders had to be even then. The precise knowledge of foreign languages, knowledge of foreign goods and foreign cultures was as indispensable then for traders as it is today.

The basic idea of the Hanseatic League is presently being revived. In 1980 the city of Zwolle hosted the "Hanseatic Days of Modern Times". Today's "Städtebund DIE HANSE" sees itself as a voluntary community of cities that wants to promote modern trade, support tourism and continue the tradition of the Hanseatic League of the Middle Ages and early modern times. It is no coincidence that the traditional Bundeszentrum Lübeck is the seat of the new Hanseatic Office and that the Mayor of Lübeck is the President of the New Hanseatic League. Today, Hanseatic Days are again being held in various cities of the New Hanseatic League almost all over Europe - this shows the current relevance of this topic.

After briefly outlining the history of the Hanseatic League, we will turn in detail to the development of education during the Hanseatic era. Finally, the question of the significance of the Hanseatic League as an educational institution today will be examined.

## **I. The Hanseatic League**

### *I. 1. What was the Hanseatic League?*

"[...] the Hanseatic League is undoubtedly one of those phenomena of medieval and early modern history whose mention awakens certain ideas in everyone, be it the image of the Lower German merchant who dominated Baltic and North Sea trade with his richly laden cogs, or the image of the brick Gothic city within whose walls commercial enterprise and self-confident civic spirit freely unfold. It is always the memory of a 'glorious' piece of German history [...]", writes Henn in the context of an exhibition in Hamburg and Rostock in 1989 and 1990 respectively, with the theme: "The Hanseatic League - reality and myth" (Henn, 1989, p. 14f).

This quotation makes it clear that an exact chronological delimitation as well as a clear definition of the phenomenon "Hanse" cannot be found in the diverse literature on the Hanseatic League and that

historiography at different times finds different definitions and interpretations. For example, Emperor Wilhelm II used the image of the proud Hanseatic League members to arouse enthusiasm for building the imperial fleet.

In recourse to Johannes Osthusen (ca. 1425 to 1506 lawyer and syndicus of the Hanseatic city of Lübeck as well as canon at Lübeck Cathedral), Henn writes that the Hanseatic League is neither a "societas" nor a "collegium", nor a "universitas", that it had neither joint assets nor its own managing officials, but was merely a firm alliance of many cities "which came together to pursue their own trading interests safely and profitably". There was also no separate seal, but only the respective seal of the city, and there was also no separate council, but rather spokesmen commissioned by a particular city who met in a particular city (*ibid.*, p. 15). Selzer consequently understands the Hanseatic League as an "umbrella for different interest groups" as well as a "special purpose association of long-distance traders" (Selzer, 2010, p. 14).

However, the view that the Hanseatic League was a union of cities is still widespread. Klose writes, for example, in a booklet for school lessons, that a union of cities developed from the union of the Wendish cities of Lübeck, Wismar and Rostock, and in Westphalia, for example, in 1246 a union between Münster, Osnabrück, Minden, Herford and others, and that there were common agreements and rules of conduct for merchants abroad (Klose, 2007, p. 9). But already at the beginning of the 20th c., for example, it was pointed out that the Hanseatic League lacked all the "essential elements of alliance law: there was no alliance treaty, no statutes, no binding definition of economic and political goals", no chairman who was allowed to speak and act on behalf of the community (Stein, 1911, quoted from Henn, 1989, p. 16f.). The sole aim of the Hanseatic League was - according to this interpretation - "to acquire trade privileges abroad and to ensure its members the undisturbed enjoyment of these privileges" (Henn, 1989, p. 17).

According to Selzer, the fact that the Hanseatic League nevertheless continued to exist for centuries, even though it could not demonstrate any corresponding organisational structures, was due to stabilising factors such as a strong sense of community and solidarity among the Lower German long-distance traders in particular. Selzer uses the term "Hanseatic culture" here, "which seeks to grasp the interactions between the self-image of the traders and that of the acting people as well as the cultural shaping of their living environment" (Selzer, 2010, p. 81). For this purpose, one can draw on research into kinship connections, because this shows that from the 12th century onwards, in the course of the Europeanisation of the Baltic Sea region, numerous new settlements were established, to which people from the Rhineland, Westphalia or Saxony moved, because they hoped for better chances in life. This can be easily seen from the family names, e.g. in Lübeck there is the alderman's family Warendorp, named after the Westphalian town of Warendorf or the Plescow family after the North Russian town of Pleskau/ Pskov, who first lived on the Swedish island of Gotland in Visby and then moved to Lübeck. Besides the family relations there were probably friendly connections, "brotherhoods and societies" (e.g. "Die Schwarzhäupter": an association of mostly German merchants in the Baltic cities of Riga, Reval, Pernau and Dorpat.) who were of great importance for the communication among political and economic elites in the Hanseatic cities" (*ibid.*, p. 83).

This means that the Hanseatic cities were not linked by a legally established association of cities, but by a social network of the relatives and friendships of their citizens. Selzer describes this vividly using the example of Dortmund's mayor Arnd Sudermann († 1473). There was a family branch in the Prussian town of Thorn (today's Toruń in Poland). Sudermann was related by marriage to the ruling mayor Christoph Hengstenberg, who in turn had Prussian relatives. His cousin was a councillor and mayor in Cologne. So, if these politicians took part in Hanseatic Days, the relatives from Dortmund, Cologne and Thorn met to discuss Hanseatic politics (*ibid.*, p. 83f.).

The disadvantage of the network was the lack of written agreements. If a legal dispute arose, the Lübeck Council, for example, decided that "liability was made dependent on the degree of care taken by the partner, which, in order to remain blameless, had to correspond to that which the person concerned applied in his own commercial matters" (ibid., p. 101). Selzer finds it astonishing that transactions were also concluded without contractual fixations and legal sanctions. On the one hand, there was the trust between the partners that the trading partner would handle his own goods with care; on the other hand, disappointed trust led to a breakdown of the trading relations between the trading partners and - which weighed even more heavily - to exclusion from the entire network. Selzer is of the opinion that it was not primarily "virtuous" to do business honestly, but "economically rational" (ibid.).

The highest management and decision-making body was the General Hansa Convention, at which all questions concerning the relationship of merchants and cities among themselves or the relations with trading partners abroad were dealt with. Actually, all decisions were supposed to be binding for the members, but there was no superior power to check or sanction the observance of the decisions. This meant that the members only complied with the decisions if they were in line with their interests (Henn, 1989, p. 21).

## *1. 2. Time localisation*

There is no date of foundation, as the Hanseatic League was never founded. Therefore, Selzer is not inclined to speak "unreservedly of a continuous Hanseatic history before the end of the 13th century" (Selzer, 2010, p. 13f). Klose also speaks of the fact that the Hanseatic League was "not simply there overnight" because "a handful of merchants decided to found an association". The author emphasises that the formation of the Hanseatic League took several centuries and was linked to three events: the ever-faster growing population, the emergence of cities as centres of crafts and trade and thus also the increasing demand for trading goods, and the opening up of the Baltic Sea by settlers from northern Germany. (Klose, 2007, p. 4; Hammel-Kiesow et al., 2015, p. 34).

Selzer (2010, p. 14) also doubts that Hanseatic history should begin at the time of the founding of the city of Lübeck (1143/ 1159) and other cities in the 13th century. However, Henn is of the opinion that important preconditions for the emergence of the Hanseatic League were the colonization of the East, the development of the Baltic Sea region, the founding of Lübeck and the formation of the Gotland Cooperative. In 1282 the Hanseatic League is mentioned in a document, but it was only the London Kontorgemeinschaft which was meant. In the middle of the 14th century, a sense of togetherness of the Lower German merchants travelling in the Baltic and North Sea region beyond the Kontorgemeinschaften is documented for the first time (Henn, 1989, p. 19).

In 1604, after more than three centuries, the King of England rejected proposals to restore the privileges of the Hanseatic cities, believing that the privileges of foreign merchants were harmful to the Kingdom of England. Graichen and Hammel-Kiesow believe that an important reason for the gradual economic decline of the Hanseatic League was the lack of ability to react appropriately to new situations, as it became increasingly difficult to find a consensus between the divergent trading interests of its members. This was exacerbated by major plague epidemics. The relocation of European economic areas and trade routes as well as the development of the first nation states is seen as the most important reason (Graichen & Hammel-Kiesow, 2011, pp. 342f.). Also, the increasing social unrest at the beginning of the 16th c., as well as the Reformation with the following Europe-wide confessional wars contributed to Hanseatic trade becoming less important.

In 1669, the last Hanseatic Convention was held in Lübeck, at which attempts were still being made to reorganize the Hanseatic League on the basis of a city alliance. According to Henn, however, this failed: "Europe no longer needed the Hanseatic League" (1989, p. 22). Nevertheless, Lübeck,

Hamburg and Bremen did not dissolve the office in Bergen until 1774, and they did not even sell the Stalhof in London until 1852: "The Hanseatic League ends as it began: without a precise date," write Graichen & Hammel-Kiesow (2011, pp. 356f.).

### *1.3. Members of the Hanseatic League*

It also proved difficult to determine who belonged to the Hanseatic League, as it avoided giving precise details of which cities were members of the Hanseatic League and which merchants were accordingly admitted to the privileges. The final decision as to who became a member lay with the branches abroad. For example, it was decided in Lübeck in 1366 that only those who were citizens of a Hanseatic city should enjoy the privileges of a German merchant. However, in 1393, Hanseatic council envoys in Bruges were told "that other merchants have always been rightly accepted in trader's rights (*kopmans recht*) [...]" (Henn 1989, p. 17). It is only from the 15th c. onwards that there are directories in which Hanseatic cities are listed by name. Depending on the understanding of "Hanseatic city", one speaks of 70 to about 200 Hanseatic cities and a distinction was made between "Hanseatic city", "Hanseatic cities" and "cities facing the Hanseatic League", i.e. between cities with full rights and those with fewer rights. The decisive factor for acceptance was whether or not advantages for the community could be expected from the city joining (*ibid.*, p. 18).

### *1.4. Branches abroad – Branch Office (Kontor)*

The economic centres of Hanseatic trade were the branches abroad, called Kontors, although this term only became common among merchants from the 16th c. onwards (Selzer, 2010, p. 54). The most important were in Novgorod (Peterhof), Bergen, London (Stalhof) and Bruges. In contrast to the entire Hanseatic League, the large offices were bearers of rights and duties. They had their own court, their own cash register, their own order which an elected "elder" administered and their own seal. According to Graichen & Hammel-Kiesow (2011, p. 264), they were not members of the Hanseatic League, because only cities or their councils or merchants could fulfil that function. They existed for a long time; between the foundation of the first office in Novgorod and the closure of the office in Bergen there lies about half a millennium. At the large Kontors such as Novgorod there were at one and the same time a maximum of 150 to 200 merchants, in Bruges there could even be 600 (Selzer, 2010, p. 54). The Peterhof in Novgorod, for example, was demarcated from the city and the Lower German merchants had their own jurisdiction. The spiritual centre was always a church. In Bruges, for example, the merchants did not live together, but in their own buildings or with landlords. Each office was therefore designed differently. Selzer sums up: "The Hanseatic League always used [existing] organisational structures for its activities [...], next to and independently of it [like the Kontors just described, authors' note]. Extremely weak structures of the entire Hanseatic League were contrasted with extremely strong structures of these Hanseatic institutions" (*ibid.*, p. 53).

### *1.5. The Goods traded in the Hanseatic League*

Selzer does not see the trade of the Hanseatic League as a pure trade of goods between Eastern and Western Europe, i.e. as a fast direct connection from Novgorod to Bruges, but as a trade that ran from city to city with numerous stopovers in the retail chains (Selzer, 2010, p. 94). Novgorod, for example, primarily supplied furs, pitch for shipbuilding and wax for candles, but it was also about the exchange of many more products. The trade route Novgorod-Lübeck-Hamburg-Bruges bridges 3,500 km on today's roads. On this long route, a merchant was not allowed to limit himself to just one line of trade, but had to buy or sell, which brought him profit. Moreover, product names such as cloth, wool or fish were only generic terms covering various kinds of the products (*ibid.*, p. 93ff).

Every long-distance trade transaction was risky: "Although Hanseatic merchants of the late Middle Ages already dreamed of incredible riches that could be won with a single transaction, the figures speak a rather sober language". An average profit rate of 15 percent was realistic, but this could also be much lower (p. 97). According to Selzer, Hanseatic trade cannot be compared with the large centrally organised and generationally stable trading houses such as the Upper German Fuggers or the Italian Medici. From the middle of the 13th c. onwards, when many merchants settled in the cities, their business structure is more comparable with the Upper German organisations. The Hanseatic long-distance merchants, however, continued to be everything in one person, such as chief accountant, cashier, clerk, etc. "The Hanseatic merchant did business, the South German merchant had a shop." (ibid., p. 98). To sum up, it can be said that the Hanseatic League presents "a historical phenomenon that largely eludes categorical thinking. What the Hanseatic League was cannot be grasped in modern constitutional terms. [...]. Nevertheless, the Hanseatic League was a vital reality." (p. 22).

## II. The development of education in the time of the Hanseatic League

It makes sense to consider education and educational pathways based on the Hanseatic League in so far as institutionalised education has always been and will always be created when solutions to social problems are sought for the fundamental functional needs of societies (Herrlitz et al., 1984, p. 56), when cultural content can no longer be passed on as life goes on and when specialised knowledge and skills are required within certain social groups (Sandfuchs, 2000, p. 18). This can be illustrated very well by the example of the education of business people.

### II. 1. School development

#### II. 1.1. Early Middle Ages

The early European Middle Ages were characterised by feudalism. The feudal lords, nobility and high clerics, formed a small upper class in contrast to the far greater number of dependent peasants, craftsmen and merchants. "The society of the Middle Ages was not a mobile meritocracy, but a traditional aristocratic society, in which the state of birth was also of decisive importance for the career of those who converted to the clergy," writes Kintzinger (2003, p. 77). This meant that attendance at monastic schools and schools at aristocratic courts, as the only forms of schooling in the Carolingian period, was reserved for noblemen who became clergymen or scholars.

Knowledge was still largely passed on orally in the 10th century. One speaks of an "oral culture" (Grams-Stehfest, 2019, p. 59). Thereafter, monastic schools lost their importance and the so-called cathedral and monastery schools were established, in which the next generation of clerics was to be trained for the diocese (Nonn, 2012, p.69; Grams-Stehfest, 2019, p. 60). In contrast to the monastery schools, the cathedral schools were also open to pupils from other social classes. There were pupils "who were future canons and partly already so as pupils (canonici scolares), those who as future worldly clerics or as laymen financed their school attendance otherwise, and finally those who could not pay the school fees and as poor pupils had to provide substitute services (scolares pauperes)" (Kintzinger, 2003, p. 107f.). However, the ascent to higher ecclesiastical office and to the court of the ruler was reserved only for the canonici scolares. Well-known cathedral schools were in Cologne, Hildesheim and Speyer, among others.

The teaching language in the monastery and cathedral schools was Latin. Until the 15th c. the "septem artes liberales", the so-called seven liberal arts, determined the teaching canon. In ancient times, "free" meant that these arts and sciences were not accessible to enslaved people, but only to "free" people. However, the word "liberales" was also derived from the Latin "liber" and means the seven book sciences: grammar, rhetoric, dialectics as well as arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy.

The cathedral schools opened up not only in terms of the student body, but also in terms of content. In contrast to the monastic schools, they were also increasingly oriented towards practical action knowledge. However, a term for "education" did not exist in the Middle Ages; it was about teaching, through which education and training were imparted and from which "educated" people should emerge (ibid., p. 12).

For merchants it was initially not possible to attend monastic schools, nor cathedral schools. Even if they were granted access, they could not have taken advantage of it, because in the early Middle Ages trade existed only in the form of "migratory trade". The merchants travelled with their sons and apprentices to the offices of the foreign cities in the Hanseatic action area and spent months or even years there. Schools, however, were tied to the seat of a monastery, a bishop or a court of nobility (Bruchhäuser, 1989, p. 117). In addition, the education offered by the Artes was not suitable for the needs of merchants. For example, the arithmetic of Artes referred to the calculation of church times and holidays and not to measures, weights and coins.

Even though trading in the early Middle Ages was mainly oral, a certain amount of writing was required, as trading books had to be kept and trading letters had to be written. Therefore, especially in the Russian Novgorod there were interpreters for the negotiations, who were called "Tolke" and were highly respected (ibid., p. 123). Members of the lower clergy offered their writing and reading skills to the merchants as auxiliary services, although the church was sceptical about the commercial pursuit of profit. Trade was not fundamentally reprehensible, as long as it was "virtuously" carried out, but the "spectrum of opinion extended from the rigorous rejection of trade independent of the kind of its exercise at all [...up to] the view that no Christian may act as a merchant ('nullus christianus debet esse mercator')" (ibid., p. 22). Excessive prices and interest were considered reprehensible usury and trading profit was considered to be reprehensible profit-seeking (ibid., p. 130).

In this context Gurjewitsch puts forward an interesting thesis: "The theologians condemned less the principle of individual property itself than its abuse" (Gurjewitsch, 1978, p. 276). In this context he also points out that the church as the largest owner in feudal society of secular wide-ranging property was by no means in favour of abolishing private property completely. "The commandment 'Thou shalt not steal', which defended all property, inevitably guarded above all the interests of the owners in a class society" (ibid., p. 277). The poor, on the other hand, were closer to Christ than the rich, so they were given abundant alms and thus saved their own souls.

Despite this rather negative attitude of the church towards trade, the priest who accompanied the merchants to Novgorod, for example, took over reading and writing in the local office. The fact that a priest accompanied the group of merchants shows the inseparable connection of the merchants with the Church and Christianity - regardless of how clerics assessed the merchants' profit-seeking. For example, a separate Christian church was already established in Novgorod at the time of the establishment of the branch office, because they wanted to be assured of spiritual support on the long journey and in the face of foreign Orthodox doctrine. However, the church was also used as a warehouse and a safe place for the cash box (Bruchhäuser, 1989, p. 131 ff). Remains of the office called "Peterhof" can still be visited in Novgorod today on the so-called trading site.

### **II.1.2. High and Late Middle Ages**

From the 12th and 13th centuries onwards, an increasing secularisation process of the species' teaching canon can be observed. "The progressing intellectual work of the centuries, but above all the travels and the crusades, trade and change, the development of 'new' literature, the influx of Jewish and Arabic scholarship, then finally of the entire Aristotelian literature, brought a tremendous increase of knowledge, not least of all of the knowledge in history, geography and natural history that could hardly be accommodated in the traditional species", writes Dolch in his work "Der Lehrplan des

Abendlandes" (1971, p. 135). One has to consider that during this time, for example, science was considered "useless and religiously dangerous" by the Franciscans (*ibid.*, p. 141). But the distance of theology from the Artes is growing, and science is separating from school science, which includes not only knowledge but also skills, i.e., a manual moment in itself (*ibid.*, p. 143). The Artes became more and more part of the university curriculum, "the smaller schools were gradually reduced to mere preparatory schools (*facultas grammaticae...*)" (*ibid.*, p. 147), the so-called Latin schools. As educational and school providers, the cities took on this type of educational knowledge. In Hildesheim, for example, a separate municipal Latin school was founded around 1225, a school which still exists today: the *Gymnasium Andreanum* (Keck, 2003).

However, in the towns newly founded since the end of the 12th century, the new townspeople needed a much more suitable education for their commercial and craft activities than the cathedral and Latin schools were able to offer. The citizens also strove for higher recognition in urban society through learned knowledge (Nonn, 2012, p. 137f.). A "new middle class that was no longer exclusively bound to land and property", Buhr writes (1976, p.9). The hierarchical feudal order of the Middle Ages was broken through and the citizens, no longer bound only to the agricultural economy, created more freedom and a say in the cities' affairs. Kintzinger emphasizes that the citizens of the cities had a decisive influence on the development of the knowledge base of contemporary society in the late Middle Ages (Kintzinger, 2003, p. 125).

Until then, commercial correspondence has been conducted in Latin. However, as trade expanded, it became much easier to conduct business in the native language. Merchants therefore needed a good command of foreign languages such as English, Dutch and Swedish in addition to their mother tongue, so that they could communicate with business partners abroad. The requirements of commercial vocational training now led to German writing, reading and arithmetic schools, which were set up by the cities, but also by guilds and private individuals.

In 1252, the council had already made an effort to establish a municipal school in Lübeck, and it was established as an elementary school in 1262. In 1281 a German school was founded in the *St. Nikolai-Kirchspiel* in Hamburg, in 1278 in *Stralsund* and in 1279 in *Wismar* (Nonn, 2012, p. 140). These schools, which were mainly established in cities near the North Sea and the Baltic Sea and in the Lower German language area, remained, however, like all other schools in the large cities, subordinated to the *Domscholastikus*.

The municipal schools were now also considered as educational paths for business people, as they taught more commercial and occupational content. For the merchants of the Hanseatic League, the beginning of written commercial communication from around the 13th c. was the most important turning point in its educational history, confirms Blankertz (1982, p. 17).

The Latin School and the German School now existed side by side. Many commercial apprentices first attended a Latin school and then the German School (Bruchhäuser, 1989, p. 306). From the municipal elementary school in Lübeck, for example, wax tablets from the time around 1370 are preserved, with writing exercises by students and style exercises on commercial business letters and sales letters. For example, we can read that 31 tons of wine were sent to a merchant at a price of 31 Lübeck Marks, or that it was requested that a good guest be named to whom the merchant could entrust his goods. The wax tablets also contain copies of political council correspondence (*ibid.*, p. 294f.).

The fact that the merchants could now read, write and calculate for themselves made them independent of the clergy. "Those who had education and training were given access to fields of activity, pensions and even career opportunities that would otherwise have remained inaccessible to them. Knowledge finally led to social validity and recognition within the urban society" (Kintzinger, 2003, p. 130). Social advancement was now also possible for those who could not show noble origin or an old-established family. Students were considered equal to the families of the aldermen and were

allowed to marry into the old families. The merchant class was not reserved for a certain social class and to become a merchant one did not have to own land. Merchants were also recruited from serfs and post-born farmer's sons, who could now secure a profitable existence. Cordes justifies this with the fact that the high mobility and rapid growth of the urban population would have made it impossible to restrict trading to established families who were alone capable of making a living. "But even around 1500, when the Hanseatic League had long finished its expansion process, the topos of the rise of the foreign [...] apprentice to the top of the city government - from dishwasher to millionaire, so to speak - was still alive" (Cordes, 2000, p. 4f.).

I have received nothing from my parents that I am obliged to anyone for. I want to die for that, too. Because what I possess, I have acquired with great effort and work from a young age. (From the testament of Bertold Rucenberg, 1364, quoted in Bruchhäuser, 1989).

The Artes still largely determined the curriculum in the municipal schools as well. The great scholastics, however, such as Albertus Magnus, among others, were more open to science, especially natural science (Dolch, 1971, p. 142), and they therefore also judged the movement of goods more openly, as long as trade was not dominated by the pursuit of profit but everything was done for the glory of God.

Particularly as the teaching canon of the Artes increasingly opened up to secular contents, the cities and their citizens increasingly came into conflict with the church. The clergy did not want to detach the imparting of knowledge and the passing on of the traditional stocks of knowledge from the church environment (Kintzinger, 2003, p. 122). But the needs of the merchants, who had to communicate with their trading partners abroad about the value of goods and money as well as about travel routes, created a "very special milieu for the development of a practically accentuated knowledge culture (...) and it was followed by specific expectations regarding the teaching of the middle-class children" (ibid., p. 126f.). That led to the fact that the "competition of the city schools was hated by the church school authorities because it threatened the church monopoly on education and thus an element of church autonomy" (Gramsch-Stehfest, 2019, p. 155). In addition, pupils were obviously withdrawn from the Latin schools, which meant a financial loss for the cathedral schools. Bruchhäuser quotes a complaint to Rome by a scholastic from Hamburg that certain people had founded illegal schools and were teaching boys in their dwellings. In a papal bull of 13th May 1402, the Benedictine Abbot of Paderborn then was ordered, under threat of excommunication, suspension and interdict, to close all illegal schools in Hamburg within six days of receiving the reminder" (1989, p. 301). And, similarly in Lübeck, although four German writing schools were allowed to remain, further schools were banned with the threat of a new ban. There are also similar reports from other Hanseatic towns such as Reval or Braunschweig (ibid., p. 302 ff). The cities had to spend months, often years, in court trials and disputes with the bishop and the cathedral chapter in order to obtain permission to establish a municipal school. Kintzinger (2003, p. 138) adds, however, that afterwards the city fathers made far too little effort to build school buildings or to spend money on qualified school principals (see also Nonn, 2012, p. 140).

The private writing and arithmetic schools in which teaching was no longer in Latin but in German were initially disparagingly referred to as "Winkelschulen". It is astonishing that girls were also taught in these schools, mostly by the wife of the master of writing and arithmetic ("Schreib- und Rechenmeister"). These teachers were initially recruited from, among others, craftsmen who knew how to write or to do arithmetic; students who dropped out of their studies were tolerated by clerics, town clerks and others. The schools were profit-seeking enterprises that had to hold their own against the competition (ibid., p. 142). It can therefore be assumed that the writing and arithmetic masters themselves had a great interest in this and that their students learned successfully.

In the private writing and arithmetic schools, both children and adults were taught, which can be seen well in pictures from this period (Kirk, 2000, p. 71). The citizens of the merchant guilds now

wanted to learn arithmetic for their commercial purposes and took private courses with the arithmetic masters. As a rule, only one or two pupils could be taught at a time (*ibid.*, p. 72). Arithmetic books were written which were intended for self-study, i.e. merchants could thus acquire arithmetic skills themselves. The invention of the printing press around 1450 also made a decisive contribution to the independent education and training of merchants.

According to Berke, the private writing and calculating schools "cannot be rated highly enough for the spread of the German language among the urban population and the training of arithmetic skills" [...] "In them the prospective merchant was taught correspondence, commercial arithmetic and, from the 16th century onwards, also book-keeping" (Berke 1960, p. 139). Furthermore, it was precisely the teachers at these schools who wrote the first German books for the merchants in the fields of correspondence, commercial arithmetic and book-keeping".

With the increasing number of lessons offered at the Latin schools and the municipal German schools, the private schools became less and less important (Kirk, 2000, p. 74).

The Reformation had a significant influence on the spread of writing and arithmetic skills and the change in the school system in the 16th century. According to Luther's teachings, every person should be able to read God's Word himself - which, according to Blankertz (1982, p. 19), was the first argument for compulsory education. Reble describes the Reformation attitude as follows: "Luther says 'yes' to the world at the same time much more decisively and much more radically 'no' than the Middle Ages" - with this he corresponds to the basic trend of the Renaissance (Reble, 1976, p. 75). At first, the Reformation brought about the decline of the school system, because the "abolition of foundations and monasteries destroyed their entire school system" (*ibid.*, p. 80). Especially the humanists lamented this development. In his 1524 paper "To the councillors of all cities in Germany that they should establish and maintain Christian schools", Luther implored the authorities to establish schools for "boys and girls" and to introduce compulsory schooling. It is especially thanks to Melanchthon that a general-scientific-formal humanistic education was established as the foundation for all scientific education (*ibid.*, p. 83). In addition to the German schools in the cities, a forerunner of the later elementary school system, the so-called "Küsterschulen" (schools for the sextons), emerged in the countryside, since instead of the parish priest, the sextons taught the children to read the Bible and catechism, to write and, in some cases, to calculate (Inckemann, 1997, p. 149 ff). For the merchants of the Hanseatic League this development had a positive influence, since most members turned to the Reformed faith.

The settling of merchants since the beginning of the 14th c. was accompanied by a "revolutionization of business operations" (Bruchhäuser, 1989, p. 258). This means that commercial activities now changed, because the rich merchants in the Hanseatic cities were able to conduct long-distance trade from their home towns, as an independent transport system developed. Settlement allowed trade contacts to be made in a large number of distant places, which intensified business operations and considerably increased the prospects for profit. It was very much in keeping with the basic motive of commercial activity: the pursuit of profit. The long-distance traders used so-called "clerks" as secretaries at the foreign accounts. The term "clerk" can be derived from the cleric in his clerical function (*ibid.*, p. 133).

After training in the municipal or private schools, the sons of the rich merchants were sent to the Kontor in Bruges in Flanders, Bergen in Norway and also to the Kontor in Novgorod in Russia, the Peterhof. There the young men were not only to learn the tools of the trade, but also to learn to take responsibility for maintaining trade relations and to show that they could get along abroad. This was a very hard time for them at times, for they were left to their own devices in foreign countries. But the fact that they were able to get to know other countries and cultures at a young age was thanks to their fathers' Hanseatic network.

With the sedentariness of rich merchants and the further flourishing of the Hanseatic cities, the opportunities for social advancement disappeared for the less privileged. The sedentariness led to families who were wealthy at the time of long-distance trade now becoming impoverished and socially marginalised (ibid., p. 260), if they did not manage to recognise and participate in the changes in commercial practice. The social permeability that still characterised the earlier centuries disappeared. An interesting development emerged, which can be described as follows (ibid., p. 141 ff.). Whereas at the Hanseatic Kontor in Novgorod (Russia), the long-distance merchant classes striving for elitism came together, at the Hanseatic Kontor in Bergen (Norway), merchants from rather less prosperous social classes, who had worked their way up the individual career ladder, were themselves engaged in trade. Repulsive from today's point of view are reports about cruel rituals in Bergen, called "games", which all new clerk apprentices had to undergo. These rituals, in which apprentices also died, were intended to deter wealthy merchant journeymen from trading in the Bergen office. It was not until 1671 that the "games" were banned by the Danish king. Bruchhäuser is of the opinion that these "games" were ultimately intended to maintain the merchant profession for a less privileged and richer class.

An interesting aspect is also that after the Peace of Stralsund (in 1370 between the Danish King Waldemar IV and the League of Hanseatic Cities) the Hanseatic League denied their competitors any participation in commercial qualification processes, like learning Dutch and Upper German for merchants who were not members of the Hanseatic League. It was forbidden, for example, to act as an interpreter in the service of "non-Hanseatic" merchants in order to thwart foreign competitors. The office in Bruges banned, under threat of punishment, the teaching of the language to Dutch apprentices in Livonia (today Latvia and Estonia), in order to exclude the Dutch from trading with Livonia. At the Hansa Convention in Lübeck in 1417 and 1447, the ban on language learning was confirmed. After the Hansa Convention in Lübeck in 1487, language students of unknown origin were required to provide written proof of membership of the Hanseatic League (149 ff.). The Hanseatic League thus contributed to the promotion of education within its own sphere and to the prevention of education outside it for fear of losing power!

## *II. 2. Knowledge acquisition within the framework of the Hanseatic League*

### **II. 2. 1. Learning abroad**

The earliest form of commercial training took place abroad and already on the journey the merchandise was accompanied by the apprentices, often the sons or nephews of the merchants, who were only 13 years old. They completed their apprenticeship in the trading area of the Hanseatic League, i.e. at the Hanseatic Kontors and branches in cities such as Novgorod, Bruges, Bergen, Riga and London. One of the oldest records is of their stay in Peterhof in Novgorod. There was a provision in the Novgorod Court Rules (Schra), written around 1270, that apprentices (they were called "children") should stay in a separate room. When German merchants were captured in Novgorod in 1421, there was an apprentice among them. During the occupation of the Hanseatic Peterhof by the Russians in 1442, German merchant apprentices were also among the prisoners. At the Livonian town council in Wolmar in 1445 it was decided that no more apprentices should be sent to Pskov (Russia), as there was trouble between German merchants and Russians (Bruchhäuser 1989, p. 166 ff.). For example, the apprenticeship at the London office (Stalhof) lasted two years - but it could also last four years or longer at other offices. The apprenticeship abroad was maintained even after the merchants had settled down.

## II. 2. 2. Training and teaching contents from the end of the 14th century

### *Typical career of a Hanseatic merchant*

Hammel-Kiesow describe the typical career of a German Hanseatic merchant at the end of the 14th century as follows (Hammel-Kiesow et al., 2015, p. 94 f): the merchant was of Lower German origin, citizen of a Hanseatic city and licensed to trade in the branches (Kontors) abroad. This meant that he profited from the privileges acquired by the Hanseatic League. Training began at the age of six. The boy learned to read, write, calculate, Latin and church singing. At the age of 12 he started a commercial apprenticeship, which usually lasted 6 years and was practice-oriented. Part of this training had to be completed abroad. To learn the language, the apprentice was supposed to stay with the locals in the host country. In this way, the apprentices learned Russian, Polish, Estonian, Latvian, English, Icelandic, among others.

These six years of apprenticeship were followed by the journeyman's time, which was often spent with the master of the apprentice. The journeyman was already allowed to travel to foreign branches on behalf of his master and to conduct commercial transactions. It is interesting to note that after the journeyman's time, the merchant did not open his own trading business or become an employee in his father's business but became a partner in a trading company (Cordes, 2000, p. 3f.). Entering a trading company was a career leap.

### *The importance of the knowledge of foreign languages, reading and writing*

First of all, both the merchants and the apprentices learned the necessary language skills as part of their apprenticeship abroad. For example, as early as 1269 the German merchants demanded that their language students be allowed to go to the Novgorod area unhindered in order to learn the language there (Bruchhäuser, 1989, p. 194). So, there were German merchant apprentices called "sprakelerers" who learned the Russian language in Russian families, (ibid., p. 196). Learning the language was the most important aspect of learning abroad. That it was not always good for the students to learn the language in a local family is shown, for example, by a report on a court case in Novgorod in 1423. On the German side, there was a complaint that the language student had been beaten to death by the gentleman with whom he lived and that he had taken his things (ibid., p. 202). One should assume, however, that such assaults were the exception.

From the 13th century onwards, Low German replaced Latin, but it was not until the middle to end of the 14th century that Low German was able to establish itself as the language of documents. From 1300 onwards, Middle Low German became the lingua franca in the Hanseatic region. "Central Low German was used for legal and commercial transactions and is also called 'Hanseatic language' in research" (Flache, 2003, p. 217). High German did not gain entry into the municipal chancelleries until the 16th century (ibid., p. 218). However, commercial apprentices were not supposed to specialise in just one language area but rather trade in several language areas. For this reason, they often completed their training at different offices in different countries.

The expansion of trade relations due to the sedentariness of rich merchants made it necessary that business transactions were well documented, so writing now was taught right from the very basics in German schools. Special books ("Schreibmeisterbücher") were used, containing illustrations for the preparation of the pens, exercises for body and hand posture, the teaching of individual characters and the application of writing patterns. The exercise material was business letters, certificates and contracts – also calligraphy was taught. Historical finds show that learning to read and write was job-related from the very beginning, with practice in, for example, entering names and nominal amounts in columns or listing types of coins (Bruchhäuser, 1989, p. 311 ff.).

There are also - initially handwritten - aids such as language books and dictionaries, e.g. the "Russian Book" written towards the end of the 15th century by the Dorpat councillor Thomas Schrove (Dorpat is today's Tartu in Estonia) and a Russian-Low German phrase book (ibid., p. 247).

### ***Knowledge of the legal framework and the merchandise***

Trading activities were subject to the regional legal norms and customs prevailing in the respective country. Merchants had to know and observe these legal conditions in order to trade successfully. This involved foreign privileges, trade contracts, account statutes and the locally customary trading modalities.

At first, the sales convent of Lübeck ("Lübisches Kaufrecht") was based on the form of itinerant trade, i.e. the simultaneous presence of seller, buyer and goods in the purchase trade from about the year 1000 onwards. From the 13th c. onwards, when merchants settled down, the delivery trade took the place of itinerant trade. Knowledge of the goods was still necessary, as was knowledge of the so-called marks of origin, which enabled a certain quality control. The merchants of the Hanseatic League limited themselves to relatively few trading objects: in Novgorod mainly fur and wax, in Bergen stockfish, in London wool and in Bruges cloth. In the foreign apprenticeship the different knowledge of the goods could be acquired locally, e.g. one had to make sure that "when buying wool, no hairs were struck under it" (ibid., p. 219). In order to acquire this knowledge, it was common practice for merchant apprentices to learn in craft enterprises as well. Apprentices were, for example, first sent to a linen maker in the countryside at Stalhof in London, in order to get to know and become familiar with the goods in addition to the English language. This training, however, did not last longer than a year and then was continued in the Kontor.

### ***Acquisition of the trading technology***

Languages are important for communication, and knowledge of the merchandise is also important so that high-quality merchandise can be distinguished from inferior merchandise. For successful trading or for making a profit, however, the so-called trading technique, i.e. the design of the act of purchase, is of particular importance, as described by (ibid., p. 223). It involves the right purchase of goods, setting prices, getting rid of the goods quickly so as not to be left sitting on them and making losses, determining suitable transport routes, dealing with customers correctly, claiming debts, weighing up risks and securities correctly. It is a matter of acquiring a basic mental attitude to acting and negotiating (ibid., p. 230 ff.). This knowledge was acquired especially on the spot in the context of learning abroad.

### ***Computability***

Profit-oriented trading was dependent on the ability to calculate. On the one hand, with regard to the dimensions of the goods, i.e. quantity in size and weight, and, on the other hand, with regard to the handling of the coinage systems. Both were highly dependent on the region or country, and therefore of great diversity. In addition, expenditure and income had to be compared. In the times of migratory trade, commercial transactions were hardly ever recorded in writing, and accordingly there was no systematic approach. With the expansion of the volume of business and the emergence of written commercial correspondence, accounting became increasingly important.

The oldest known book of arithmetic in German was written by the arithmetic master Ulrich Wagner in 1482 in Nuremberg and contains a clear orientation of the contents of the lessons towards the profession of a merchant. For example, the "rule of three" was carried out when buying various commodities. The calculation methods were different in the various calculation books: there was line calculation (Roman numerical system with abacus), but also numerical calculation (Arabic numerical representation), followed by the acquisition of basic arithmetical operations (ibid., p. 319 ff). The rule of three was of particular importance, in that, for example, it had to be calculated how much x metres of cloth cost if one metre costs y guilders. The use of the rule of three was also important in the conversion of the various coinages, measurements and weight units. The calculation of profit and also of loss was of particular importance, as was the calculation of interest and compound interest.

Interesting are the verbal factual arithmetical tasks, which have always had a connection to the commercial profession. There were also matching illustrations for these arithmetical tasks, such as a ship, a customs house, a herring buoy or the illustration of various coins. It was not about an explanation of the calculation method, but only about the application of rules and correct calculation results. There were calculating boards for "calculating on the line", arithmetic pennies (Rechenpfennige). Referring to Adam Riese (German arithmetic master in the 16th c.) Bruchhäuser wrote: "Riese knew how to methodically combine line and pen-and-ink arithmetic by placing the more descriptive use of arithmetic pennies in the individual arithmetic operations before the application of the more abstract numbers" (ibid., p. 340).

The first types of bookkeeping can be traced back to a merchant from Lübeck as early as 1330 - these were initially done rather informally. It was not until the 14th and 15th centuries that double-entry bookkeeping was learned as part of foreign teaching, and from the middle of the 16th century onwards, arithmetic masters in schools also adopted this teaching content. However, there were hardly any textbooks. In 1549 Wolfgang Schweicker of Nuremberg wrote a work on double bookkeeping ("Zwifach Buchhalten"), to which all further works referred (ibid., p. 334).

### ***Social behaviour***

Within the framework of the Hanseatic League, group norms of social behaviour were taught to young business people. For example, in the court orders of 1270 and 1325 there was an "Elderly man" in the Novgorod Kontor. He ran the Kontor, also acted as a judge and was called in when verbal disputes led to violence. Self-administration was a social characteristic of the Hanseatic foreign accounts (ibid., p. 236f.). The aim was to acquire professional virtues and behaviour patterns typical of the profession from the perspective of profit-oriented, rational trade. The journeymen had a model function for the apprentices and were also responsible for their training. The model was that of "professional diligence and a modest personal lifestyle" (ibid., p. 240).

### ***Methods and media of content mediation by the Hanseatic League***

The most effective method was probably "the inclusion of apprentices in the business activity and their participation in it" (ibid., p. 244). The contents became vivid and could be experienced directly. The fact that apprentices were fully involved in the business also entailed risks due to their limited professional experience. There was, however, the custom that the apprentices were allowed to carry on a kind of retail trade on their own - "all kinds of spices and trifles" (ibid., p. 245) -, which was not permitted to German merchants, e.g. in Novgorod (laid down in the Kontor rules and regulations of the Peterhof of 1371), Bruges and other Kontors. Also, in Reval, for example, the long-distance traders left the sale of salt to apprentices. They learned how to deal with the customers, they practised the language and profit-oriented trading techniques without great economic risk (ibid., p. 246).

In the transition from the Middle Ages to modern times (around the end of the 15th to the beginning of the 16th century) the worldview of wider Europe changed and with it the methods and media of imparting knowledge and skills. It was a slow and gradual process and the educational paths of the states continued to differ.

In the Renaissance period, the values of antiquity had been valid. Autonomous thinking was now expected and perceiving oneself as an individual became the actual goal of life (Reble, 1967, p. 64). At the same time man experienced the world in a new and deeper way. The basic trend of the epoch was lust for life, worldliness and a broadening of horizons. In hindsight it seems clear that the conquests of the world at that time, the voyages of discovery and the expansion of trade did not fall into this epoch by chance, and that rather this new basic attitude also had to become visible as an outrageous expansion of the economic and technical field. And the ideal of man was the literarily and artistically educated, philosophically open-minded and cosmopolitan man (ibid., p. 68) - that is, the man who knows foreign countries, who travels, who confronts and deals with foreign cultures and languages.

In the history of education this epoch is closely connected with the term "Humanism". In the whole of Europe, i.e. also in the whole area of the Hanseatic League, the need for a purely secular and no longer theologically formed education was recognized and the question of the right teaching method arose. It was criticized that after ten years of schooling a child learned only a fair amount of Latin and hardly any Greek. The children of merchants who travelled to other countries learned to speak various foreign languages fluently in a much shorter time. It was concluded that the lack of success of school language teaching must be due to the method. In addition, those who went abroad also had much more knowledge of the world than students who only went to school. The humanists also denounced the hard 'breeding and beating' pedagogy of the Middle Ages (ibid., p. 71).

*In summary*, it can be said that the qualification requirements of Hanseatic merchants advanced the development of German national education. The emergence of cities in the Middle Ages with a self-confident citizenry consisting largely of merchants provided schools that were accessible to a broad section of the population and became increasingly cosmopolitan. From this point of view, the development of education within the Hanseatic League and the general development of schools were mutually beneficial. However, it is also interesting to note that not only learning in schools but also learning locally (especially abroad) was important for the acquisition of knowledge by the merchants.

### **III. The time of the Hanseatic League as learning matter today**

#### *III. 1. Reception of the Hanseatic League in the last two centuries*

The phenomenon "the Hanseatic League" - like most historical facts - has been received and interpreted in different ways throughout the history of research. Every historical work is a child of its time. However, Hanseatic history has also been abused by ideology.

Due to Germany's stronger orientation towards world trade and the establishment of a German naval power in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Hanseatic League was an excellent example of economic upswing and colonialism. For this reason, the Hanseatic League was much more important in textbooks than the southern German city associations (Buhr, 1976, p. 32).

It was "suggested to the student the necessity of a turn to world politics" and "a basis for the Wilhelminian naval policy" was created" (ibid., p. 52). However, there was also a socially critical Hanseatic image in the embodiment of the pirates (especially Claus Störtebecker) who worked against the "exploitative pepper sacks".

The image of the Hanseatic League shaped in the Middle Ages as the embodiment of German greatness was used to compensate for the defeat in the First World War. During the Nazi era, the Hanseatic League was accorded enormous national and political significance (Graichen, & Hammel-Kiesow, 2011, p. 361 ff). It was now about the "Hanseatic naval heroes" and the "Hanseatic citizen" as a "political and soldierly man" (Buhr, 1976, p. 84 f). "The Hanseatic League is thus placed within the framework of the National Socialist general theme of the expansion of the German life space" (ibid., p. 100). It was defined as an "association on a national basis" and this meant that the German merchant felt superior to the foreign one (ibid., p. 101).

After the Second World War, the history books had to be revised also with regard to the depictions of the Hanseatic League. These revisions were partly based on the textbooks of the Weimar Republic. According to Buhr, even after 1945, many authors found it difficult to keep the Hanseatic image free of nationalist ideas. (Buhr 1976, p. 135). In the textbooks up to the 1970s Buhr misses economic and social history perspectives that could be brought to the attention of the students, especially on the topic of the Hanseatic League. This has changed in recent decades. In the booklet published by Kultur und Werbung Lippstadt GmbH in cooperation with the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Historischer Stadtkerne

in Nordrhein-Westfalen "Die Hanse. Merchants Conquer Europe. Ein Heft für den Unterricht" (Klose, 2007), for example, children are given a picture of the Hanseatic League that is largely appropriate to the current state of research. Here, for example, reference is also made to contemporary designations that go back to the Hanseatic League such as "Hansaplast", "Lufthansa" and the car registration numbers HH (Hanseatic City of Hamburg), HL (Hanseatic City of Lübeck) etc. Also, the topic "International Hanseatic Days today" is taken up.

Today, representatives of globalization see the medieval Hanseatic League as the forerunner of our globalization processes (Graichen & Hammel-Kiesow 2011 p. 360). However, the frequently made comparison of "the Hanseatic League" and "the European Union" should always be viewed critically. By no means is the Hanseatic League a forerunner of the EU. Both are phenomena of a very special kind. Just looking at the respective actors - medieval merchants, on the one hand, and modern democratic nation states on the other - shows the difficulty of a comparison.

### *III. 2. The Hanseatic League as learning matter today*

The phenomenon "Hanseatic League" offers many possibilities to transport topics and contents. In addition to its purely historical dimension, i.e. its obviously important significance for the social development in the north of the Holy Roman Empire and beyond that its influence on the whole of northern and central Europe, it can also be used as a framework for many other topics. For the development of the medieval city as an independent form of society, long-distance trade is of great importance. The rich merchants were an important group of the growing bourgeoisie. In northern Germany, the Hanseatic League as a network of rich long-distance traders is one aspect that helps to understand medieval society and its development.

The phenomenon "Hanseatic League" is therefore a learning matter in itself. The "Hanseatic League" is a thoroughly complex subject, which, as the history of research shows, has been ideologically distorted on several occasions and still often imprecisely and therefore sometimes incorrectly communicated.

The easily established references to today's world are advantageous for the mediation of business life. Our society today is dependent on long-distance trade. In order to approach the topic of globalization, for example, it can be helpful to look at the activities of Hanseatic merchants. Or on the subject of communication, the juxtaposition of letters and modern digital message formats makes the unbelievable amount and speed of today's communication, which many people (especially younger ones) are not necessarily aware of, only clearer. In the Middle Ages it was certainly the merchants who wrote the most letters, as they were dependent on information for their business.

Many of the topics and possibilities naturally concern medieval merchants in general. What can be shown particularly well with reference to the Hanseatic League are ways of cooperation with individual competition. Actually, the Hanseatic merchants and also the Hanseatic cities had strongly divergent interests, but nevertheless they created a system for themselves in which they were nearly always able to work and profit together. Understanding the mechanisms behind this is also important for modern societies. This is where the phenomenon of the "Hanseatic League" is particularly valuable as learning matter. It could be interesting to explore the extent to which the special training of Hanseatic merchants (see above) had an influence on the network of friendships, acquaintances and relatives that ultimately lay behind Hanseatic activities. It is reasonable to assume that it was precisely during the apprenticeship years abroad and in befriended merchant families that contacts and friendships were made that made a successful career within the Hanseatic network possible in the first place. Conversely, the personal level of acquaintances may be a particular strength of the network.

Even if a comparison goes too far, the outlining of the Hanseatic League against the backdrop of the European Union offers many opportunities to approach both topics in depth. If one works out the intentions and motives of the respective actors and looks at the resulting structures, astonishing parallels or differences become apparent. Modelling such an outlining allows deep insights into both topics.

### *III. 3. The importance of the European Hanseatic Museum in Lübeck*

The European Hanseatic Museum in Lübeck explores the questions of what the Hanseatic League was and what economic role it played in Europe on an exhibition area of ca. 3,500 m<sup>2</sup>. Especially the question of which parallels and insights can be gained from the phenomenon "Hanseatic League" for our time will be the focus of the museum's research and communication. The exhibition shows the multifaceted development of an initially loose pool of Lower German merchants into one of the leading European trade networks. Through media work-stations, staged presentations and valuable original objects, the visitor is sent on a journey through time, beginning in the 12th century and enabling him to experience the daring and greed for profit of the merchants, adventurous trade journeys, exciting trading places as well as wealth, illness, life and work in the Middle Ages in detail and intensively. A special highlight of the Hanseatic exhibition are the high-quality productions in which students can experience important stages of Hanseatic history at close quarters and in which the Middle Ages come alive to a certain extent. This emotional, haptic access to historical content is an impressive experience especially for schoolchildren. How cramped was the journey with a cog really? What do wool or linen fabrics feel like? How heavy was chain mail? What is shown is always based on historical and archaeological evidence and the latest scientific research. The presentations are complemented by valuable original objects, such as rare documents, paintings or collection pieces from international museums, which complete the visitors' journey through time.

This special and high-quality exhibition is at the heart of the European Hanseatic Museum's educational work, as it brings the most important contents closer to a broad public. There are special offers for the in-depth study of individual topics, e.g. a workshop on writing or a business game that provides insights into the difficulties of consensus negotiation. The museum's programme is rounded off by numerous events such as lectures, panel discussions and the like, which take a broader view of economic activity in the past and present, thus demonstrating the relevance of Hanseatic history for our society today.

Together with the Research Centre for the History of the Hanseatic League and the Baltic Sea Region (FGHO), the European Hanseatic Museum Lübeck aims to be a hub of Hanseatic research. This is where the latest results of international research come together, are processed and made available to a broad public.

### **Concluding remark**

The examination of the topic "Education and the Hanseatic League" has shown that the general history of education in the Middle Ages cannot be separated from the specific history of merchant education, but that both strands of development have influenced and stimulated each other. This can be shown very well with the example of the education of merchants within the Hanseatic League.

It would now be interesting to compare the development of merchant education in Upper Germany with the development in Lower Germany, which developed partly in parallel, but partly also differently. It can be seen that the Upper German economic and city union model of the cities of Augsburg, Esslingen, Nürnberg and Ulm with the Upper German merchant dynasties and societies (Fugger, Welser, Ravensburger Handelsgesellschaft) and their long-distance trade with Northern Italy, Spain, France, but also India and others, meets with far less interest in educational literature than the

Hanseatic League. This may be due to the network of the Hanseatic League that the merchants created, which is interesting for the present day, or to the political ideologization of the Hanseatic League in the last two centuries described above, which has still not completely disappeared - or perhaps also to the "seafaring romanticism" with which the Hanseatic League is all too often associated.

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