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Axio-creative Experience of Education at Preschool Institutions of Russia in the 20s–30s of the 20th Century (the Republic of Tatarstan Example)

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Abstract

Based on a comprehensive study of socio-historical, psychological and pedagogical theories and concepts of preschool education, this article puts forward the idea of pedagogical axio-creation, expressed in the system of measures aimed at the creation and formation of new social and moral values in younger generations or at the restoration, rethinking of the old ones. The work is devoted to the consideration of axio-creative experience in the education of preschoolers at the formation stage of the system of public preschool education in Russia in the 20s–30s of the 20th century. The study is based on historical material on upbringing children at preschool institutions of the Republic of Tatarstan, which was and is a part of the Russian Federation. The authors of the article focus their attention on solving the tasks of social, moral, ideological and political education of preschoolers. In the course of their investigation there are disclosed and described peculiarities of carrying out pedagogical work on the formation of new social and moral concepts and behavior habits of children. The article reveals and describes the features of labor, patriotic, international and anti-religious education of preschoolers during the studied period. At the same time, the authors consider issues of changing the content of education and upbringing of children in kindergartens, as well as promotion and application of new forms and methods of work with children of preschool age according to the principle of education common to the whole Soviet educational system – connection with life and modernity.

Keywords: Preschool institutions, Axio-creation, Pedagogical axio-creation, Values, Social and moral values, System of public preschool education, Russia, the Republic of Tatarstan.

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Introduction

The modern period in Russian history and education continues to be a period of transformation of values. Alongside with positive changes there are observed negative phenomena that are expressed in the deformation of the traditional moral norms and moral attitudes of the country, in transformation of young people's life priorities. The current situation in the society demands that spiritual and moral development and education of the personality of a Russian citizen should be given priority in the spheres of education (Danilyuk, 2009, p. 15). The implementation of these requirements involves organization of educational work on the basis of traditional domestic values, which include mastering the universal norms of morality, formation of the internal system of moral behavior regulators, development of the ability to choose between good and evil, to measure one's own actions and behavior with humanistic criteria.

The pace and nature of the development of a state directly depend on the civic position of people, their motivational and volitional spheres, life priorities, moral norms and convictions and spiritual values (Danilyuk, 2009, p. 5). However political, economic and social changes in society generate their own system of values, in which there may appear new values and the old ones may be partially transformed or rejected. The historical experience shows that successful development of society is provided not by confrontational overcoming of some values by others, but by their evolutionary supplementation, mutual enrichment and integration of their positive properties, the discovery and description of which is the task of historical-pedagogical science. According to the purpose of this study, it is important to assert that in the years under consideration in the system of public preschool education in Russia (Republic of Tatarstan in particular), there was observed axiological-creative practice of work with preschoolers, presented as an activity aimed at the formation of children's social and moral values.

Materials and Methods

The solution of that goal was provided by a set of complementary research methods: axiological, according to which the parameters of the analysis of historical and pedagogical phenomena were determined by the recognition of a person as the highest value in society; civilizational, allowing to consider the historical and pedagogical processes as complex systems determined by political, socio-economic and cultural factors; deideological, which was characterized by a departure from the ideologization of historical-pedagogical research. The ideas put forward here are based on the examination of the studies of the preschool education development in Russia (L.M. Volobueva, L.N. Litvin, A.M. Potapovskaya, etc.) and in Tatarstan (V.M. Gorokhov, M.S. Korneeva, R.S. Mardashova and others), materials of periodical press, of the All-Russian congresses on pre-school education, on historical documents of the National Archives of the Republic of Tatarstan (fund 271 – Public administration bodies of the Kazan province, fund 3682 – Narcompros of TASSR).

Results and discussions

Axio-creation (from the Latin. axio – value, creatio – creation) is a system of measures for creation and formation of new values of an individual or a group of people or for restoration, regeneration, rethinking of the former ones.

Such a transformation can be associated not only with the revival of the lost imperishable human values, but also with a change in the ideological paradigm of a state, as a result of which there are implanted and cultivated values that correspond to the completely defined (political, socio-economic, cultural) goals of the state at a specific historical stage of the society's life.

The study put forward the idea of axio-creative pedagogy, expressed most convincingly in terms of the moral education of preschool children during the formation of the system of public preschool education in Russia and its part Tatarstan. The introduced concept reveals the special nature of the pedagogical impact

on children of preschool age, determined by the new order of life of the Soviet society and aimed at instilling into children new social and moral values and changing the old ones. These new values were reflected in the concepts of preschool education in the period under review.

The concept of 'value' refers to one of the key concepts of modern social thought and is used in psychology and pedagogy to "interpret objects, phenomena, their properties as well as abstract ideas that embody social ideals and act because of this as a standard of due" (Psychological and Pedagogical Dictionary, 2006, p. 175). The problem of values is widely considered in domestic and foreign psychological, pedagogical, and sociological research works (Gershunsky, 1998; Nikandrov, 1997; Karakovsky, 1993; Huntington, 1993; Mair, 2004).

Social and moral values are socially significant for a person, a social community and the society as a whole material and social objects, spiritual and moral activities of people and their results; the notions of good, justice, patriotism, love, friendship, etc. that are accepted and shared by most people (Jordanova, 2000, p.13). Social and moral values are the benchmark for most people; the pedagogical process is aimed at their formation.

In the first years of the Soviet power (1917–1923) the issues of upbringing children of preschool age were connected with the pedagogical ideas observed in the previous period. The upbringing of a person and a citizen was considered as cultivating ideals of human development. Shortly before the beginning of the 20s of the last century the general humanistic formulation of the goal of upbringing was understood as the upbringing of a 'harmonious personality' (1st All-Russian Congress on Preschool Upbringing, 1919); 'the development of a free, creative, independent personality' (Litvin, 1992, p. 56); 'education of a person in the harmonious integrity of all his talents and abilities given to him by the nature' (Mardashova, 2004, p. 72) etc.

Such an understanding of the tasks in upbringing of preschool children is characteristic of the early years of the formation of a network of preschool institutions in the Tatar Republic (Autonomous Tatar Socialist Soviet Republic as a part of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic was formed in 1920). There were about 200 preschool establishments in the republic by the beginning of 1920. Materials of the meetings of the provincial department of national education Board in 1918-1919 indicated that at the kindergartens of the post-revolutionary period there were no specific programs and specific instructions from the preschool section. They suggested: "...choosing themselves methods and techniques of educational work with children, a type of preschool institution that would correspond to the current life and which would not coincide with any type in preschool literature of that time" (Yakubovskaya, 1923, p. 11). Therefore some kindergartens continued to use elements of the F. Frebel system, others introduced into their work methods of education borrowed from the experience of L.K. Schleger, and some others based their work on the ideas of E.I. Tikheeva. A lot of kindergartens (№ 1, 2, 3) took a method of the central idea as the basis of their work, when all types of classes were planned around some topic: games, excursions, drawing, modeling, manual labor. Some kindergartens worked on a system of free education, solving the tasks of free development of the abilities inherent in children by nature, developing independence, creative initiative and social feelings.

However shortly before the mid-20s under the influence of a complex of political, social, economic, ideological and psychological-pedagogical factors there began to take shape a new model of education. It was a communist form of education. New political conditions determined the nature of economic and cultural development of the country, dictated the ideology and formed the social requirement of personal development. All that found expression in the psychological-pedagogical theory. A change in value orientations in the society led to a transformation of goals, objectives and content in education. Human values were opposed to the values of the class struggle. Now the main goals from the perspective of the 'communist method' of education were training of fighters for the new ideal of society and education of a

'new human being' – a builder of communism. It was necessary to introduce new ideals and values as early as possible, from an early age.

It was the 2nd All-Russian Congress on pre-school education (1921) which initiated the revision of the entire educational work. It posed a task of "registering and revision of pedagogical work with preschool children" (Mardashova, 2004, p. 232). The congress witnessed a report "System of Preschool Education" delivered by P.P. Blonsky, in which he stressed that "only by relying on the Marxist theory one can create new pedagogical approaches to the upbringing of the younger generation" (Salova, 2001, p. 14). In this regard, there was raised an issue of creation of a Soviet model of a kindergarten based on Marxist principles, which should be founded on new social and moral values and the pedagogical tasks characteristic of the Soviet system of preschool education.

The directions made at the congress began to be actively implemented after the congress of representatives of the provincial departments of social education, which took place in March 1923. At the congress R.I. Prushitskaya made a report "Revising the content of work with children at preschool institutions", in which she mentioned the necessity "... to think over the whole situation at children's institutions, their entire organization and the content of work with children from the contemporary point of view" (Salova, 2001, p. 16). In working with children, a new principle of upbringing was put forward – a connection with life and modernity, which determined for many years the direction in the choice of content, forms and methods of work with preschool children. The ideas expressed at the congress were approved in a special document "The main provisions of pedagogical work at preschool institutions" (1924). Much attention in the document was given to the participation of preschoolers in the construction of their life, to the development of the beginnings of self-organization and self-government, to the connection of a children's institution with the surrounding life and modernity, to the development of children's teams.

After the all-Russian events were held, the application of the previous methods and techniques in the practice of educating preschoolers in regions and in Tatarstan in particular became sharply limited. Such values as 'morality' and 'morals' in their old meaning were rejected as idealistic prejudices. It was declared moral that served the communist construction. In the light of new values of education, there were put forward on the agenda priority issues: ideological-political education, labor education and collectivism education, the work on which was required to be carried out taking into account the environment and close connection with modernity.

Ideological-political education was recognized as the most important direction in the formation of new social and moral values. Its goal was to form a political consciousness in which there should be embodied the perception of class interests and goals. Its most important task was education in the spirit of high political vigilance, irreconcilability towards manifestations of alien ideology and morality. The ideological-political education in the preschool years included patriotic, international and atheistic education (Salova, 2001, p. 188).

Nomination in the 20s – 30s of the idea of patriotism as a priority value for the Soviet people was largely determined by the fact that for well-known political and socio-economic reasons the party leaders were actively seeking a means to unite the population. And the idea of patriotism became such a means. It had centuries-old traditions and a high unifying principle. Based on that theory on the instructions of I.V. Stalin, there were created textbooks on the history of the USSR for patriotic education of citizens in the early 1930s. And in 1934 there was restored teaching of Russian history at schools (Surovtseva, 1930, p. 5). The press published articles in which Soviet patriotism was proclaimed the highest value of Soviet people. It was expressed in love for the Soviet country, care for its interests and readiness to protect it from enemies (Surovtseva, 1930, p. 7). However, during these years Soviet patriotism was considered not as a universal moral quality, but as a class-determined feeling that was endowed only by the proletarian-socialist masses, while other classes or social groups were denied genuine patriotism, either partially or fully. Love for the

Soviet Motherland was preached through sacrifice in serving the cause of Lenin-Stalin, socialism, and the priority of the public over the personal.

In the upbringing of the patriotic feeling in children of preschool age there were chosen content, means and methods appropriate to the tasks. For the first time, elementary knowledge about the country's political system and especially significant events of public life was included in the work with preschool children. The report on the preschool work of the main department of social education (Glavsotsvos) at the People's Commissariat of the TASSR for the first quarter of 1925 stated that all its institutions in Kazan and in cantons, kindergartens included, were recommended to celebrate the 20th anniversary of 1905 revolution from December 10 to January 22 of 1925 with the goal of "committing into the memory of children the events of that revolution, as the moment from which a serious revolutionary movement of the working class began ..." (Mardashova, 2004, p. 132). The business plan for celebrating the 20th anniversary of 1905 revolution included the study with children of the following events: "1) the revolution of 1905 and the events of January 9; 2) 1905 in Kazan, national movement; 3) Bolsheviks in the underground; 4) the illness and death of Lenin; 5) two years without Lenin: our shortcomings and achievements ... " (Mardashova, 2004, p. 133); 6) arrangement of places dedicated to the holiday, edition of wall newspapers, conducting the holiday itself. For the formation of preschoolers' knowledge about the political system of the Soviet country it was significant to use materials about the experience of kindergartens, telling children what Soviets (Soviet councils) were like or what place co-operatives occupied in the life of the country. There were put forward the following tasks: "1) to explain the essence of co-operation to children; 2) to give children the opportunity to specifically feel the value of co-operation; 3) to cause a desire for cooperation in children ..." (Safronova, 1930, p. 8); and subsequent work was carried out with the preschoolers: "... For an excursion there was chosen one of private groceries and a grocery cooperative. We bought a bar of soap at both stores. After the excursion there was held a discussion during which the children learned the difference between cooperation and private trade: 1) profit from a private shop went to the needs of one person, and in the co-operative society – to improve the needs of all shareholders (maintenance of nurseries, orphanages and other cultural institutions at the expense of profits); 2) a piece of soap from the private trader was paid for with three silver coins and one large copper coin (35 kopecks), at the cooperative – with two silver coins and one small copper coin (22 kopecks); 3) the private trader wrapped the soap in a dirty piece of paper, at the cooperative – in a clean sheet of paper; 4) at the private shop all the foodstuffs lay open with flies crawling over them, at the cooperative all the goods were in jars, behind glass and gauze; 5) the private shop was small, the cooperative was large and there were a lot of goods in it. Hence the children themselves concluded that goods of private owners were more expensive, they were worse and scarce, private owners were working only for themselves, while at the cooperative they were working to improve the position of all the shareholders ... " (Safronova, 1930, p. 9).

It is surprising how the preschoolers were familiarized with the work of the Soviet authorities — Soviets. In the proposed methodology, the following guidelines were recommended: "... children should further clarify the knowledge they had received earlier about the Soviets, learn that Soviets: 1) take care of the economy of a city (build new factories, power plants, bridges, houses, bathhouses, etc.); 2) take care of workers and their children (they organize kindergartens, nurseries, playgrounds, hospitals, canteens, provide workers with shoes, clothes, etc.); 3) children should find out that workers, working men and women of all nationalities can be elected to our Soviets, they should learn why priests, kulaks (affluent peasants), bourgeoisie, enemies of the Soviet power can't be elected to Soviets; that there are no Soviets abroad, that bourgeois rule there; 4) it is necessary to strengthen interest of children to the work of the Soviets, to cultivate a number of preliminary skills, abilities to participate in them..." (Surovtseva, 1930, p. 6).

The link between patriotic education and internationalism was extremely close. The peculiarity of international education in the 20s–30s was proletarian internationalism, which openly proclaimed the

international character of the struggle of the proletariat for its class liberation and the construction of the communist society throughout the world. In working with preschoolers the tasks were to form solid convictions for the need of international solidarity of the working class in the struggle against capitalism for their national liberation, to foster respect for the rights and national independence of large and small nations and feelings of friendship and respect for workers of all races and nations. Methods of international education recommended organizing socio-political holidays, which were to include children's performances, processions of children in national costumes, carnivals of representatives of different nationalities, songs and dances of various nations. In everyday life there were used conversations about the life of other nations, folk tales and games, reading fiction, viewing pictures, joint work activities of children of different nationalities, etc.

Priority was given to work as an undoubted value, formed among preschoolers in those years. The period under review was characterized by the high prestige of labor and a working person. Educators and teachers needed to form in children an awareness of happiness and satisfaction from work. However, the essence of the task of labor education advanced in the 20-s as the main direction of education for the younger generation was such that its implementation in practice according to the declared pedagogical principle — the connection of education with modernity and to the requirement for children to become aware of themselves as the creators of a new life implied the formation of collective work skills. Therefore, preschool children had to understand that one could achieve results in work only working together, in cooperation with others. Not any labor in general and not labor for the sake of itself was considered valuable, but labor for the benefit of the society, of the entire Soviet country. At the same time it was children's labor at a preschool institution that was recognized as the main means to achieve that goal. Children were instructed to be on duty in the kitchen, participate in cleaning the rooms, setting the table, washing dishes, taking care of animals and plants. The economic life of an institution through organized children's labor, had to cultivate a sense of collectivism. With such a formulation of the problem the participation of children in the economic life of the institution turned into an integral part of their life, into a "a kind of work".

The involvement of children into the economic life of the institution and the connection of kindergarten with the life of schools and enterprises were the main approaches in the labor education of preschoolers. Excursions to enterprises, invitations of representatives of different professions, organization of holidays were widely used during those years. A mandatory part of the celebrations dedicated to the October Revolution, the International Day, the International Women's Day, was the "moment of work" staged during those holidays. Here are recommendations for the celebration of the October Revolution in preschool institutions in Kazan in 1925: "... each institution takes as a theme in its work in senior and middle groups any type of work available for children and forms as if it were a shop: a painters' shop, a bakers' shop, a blacksmiths' shop, a carpenters' shop. A number of excursions to workshops should be made: children should be watching, talking. At the same time they are learning poems, songs, games. At the celebration the performance of the work chosen by the institution is being staged. Children create everything they need for their shop: they sew costumes, prepare labor tools..." (Mardashova, 2004, p. 137). An important part of labor education in the years under consideration was polytechnic education of preschoolers, as it was indicated by the polytechnic congress held in 1932: "... the business of polytechnic education cannot be viewed as school business only — it is business of the entire public education system, regardless of degree and age" (Degtyarenko, 1932, p. 18). At the preschool level polytechnic education was understood as laying the foundations, developing prerequisites for the further polytechnic development of children. The tasks of the polytechnic labor training of preschoolers included awakening in them interests in technology, creation of positive goals and socialist attitude to work, which should be expressed in raising the need for work, the ability to work collectively, and in expanding their horizons in the accessible for them field of production environment (acquaintance with materials, tools, elementary basics of energy, mechanics, adults' labor, etc.). Among the ways of preschoolers polytechnic education there was indicated

children's activity within preschool institutions (work, polytechnic games, invention), a properly organized environment within institutions (availability of working rooms and places and joinery workbenches), well-chosen work content.

In connection with the tasks of polytechnic education there was mentioned participation of children in agricultural production. The following recommendations were heard from the pages of the journal *'Preschool Education'*: "... In recent years, almost all preschool institutions have been building their work on the feasible participation of children in social construction. Let's take into consideration agricultural production: children, for example, not only organize a vegetable garden for themselves, but produce new varieties of seeds, seeds of new plants for a patronized collective farm, produce or grow with schoolchildren seedlings for it. In collective farms through pre-school and childcare institutions in general, new crops, new branches of agriculture are being introduced into the masses. For example, in many places, especially in such areas as Moscow, North-Western, Western and Northern peasants have no idea about such plants as radishes, tomatoes. Meanwhile, the culture of radishes requires little effort; children can be used here from the age of 4 ... Preschoolers raise chickens and send them to collective farms. They invent rational drinking bowls and feeding troughs. At collective farms they take part in arrangement of poultry and rabbit breeding, cultivation of strawberries, etc. ..." (Loganson, 1930, p. 4).

Not less important direction of ideological and political education of preschoolers in the 20–30-s was an atheistic upbringing aimed at "developing" a materialistic world view and atheistic convictions. Mercy, humanity and other spiritual qualities were declared false. They were replaced by such concepts as "bezbozhnik" (atheist) (after the name of the magazine "Bezbozhnik" for children and the same magazine for adults), an "anti-religious" person and others. The first "book" on the anti-religious education of preschoolers by V.V. Taubman and E.D. Gerke set the following goal: "To focus the attention of teachers and paedologists (paedology was the study of children's behavior and development) on the formulation of the very problem of anti-religious upbringing of a child of preschool age and to outline the first milestones in the new section of practical pedagogical work ..." (Burovtseva, 1930, p. 33). Defining the place of anti-religious work in the system of preschool education, the authors pointed out the incompatibility of religious education with the tasks that were set by the Soviet reality to the pre-school institutions. Out of the methods of anti-religious work with preschoolers, it was recommended to use observations on phenomena and processes in nature, on labor processes of adults and phenomena of social life; experiments; child labor; conversations and storytelling; interview polls; discussions on religious and ritual topics at children's meetings; organizing social and political holidays as opposed to religious ones; distraction of children from church celebrations by arranging excursions, games, light pictures; attracting senior preschoolers to participate in anti-religious campaigns on the eve and on the days of the celebrations of Christmas and Easter, etc. In the arrangement of the work on anti-religious education the connection of anti-religious work with the work within the following three sections was pointed out: nature, labor, society. They were recommended both at schools and kindergartens. The book also pointed out the links of anti-religious education with internationalism and the incompatibility of anti-religious work with the introduction of a fairy tale in the everyday life of a child. However, the authors of the book made sharp remarks about the lack of a clearly and transparently formulated goal of anti-religious education and made corrections of the following type: "The task of the present time is not generally anti-religious education, but education of an atheist, education of an active atheist, generation in children a negative attitude to all kinds of manifestations of religiosity and a desire to fight them" (Burovtseva, 1930, p. 35).

Conclusion

The presented characteristics of the substantial and methodological aspects of pedagogical work in preschool institutions of Tatarstan during the period of the formation of the preschool education system in the region is far from being fully drawn. Nevertheless taking into account the known concrete historical

conditions it allows us to conclude that in the 1920s – 30s of the last century there was taking place restructuring of the system of values. The identified and described axio-creative experience of educational work with preschoolers allows us for the first time to define the system of pedagogical influences which were taking place in moral education. The type of this system of can be determined by the category of “pedagogical axio-creation”. Alongside with the so-called traditional values (universal categories, norms and some religious precepts), which retain their value in any socio-cultural contexts, but tend to be transformed under the influence of a complex of factors, there arose new values-innovations. Both traditional and innovational values act as peculiar algorithms regulating human activity and behavior. The declared values determine tasks, content, forms and methods of education in the education system as a whole and within its separate parts at a particular historical stage. The facts from the experience of preschool institutions in Tatarstan presented in the article confirm the idea of axio-creative pedagogy in domestic preschool education, put forward by us, the experience of implementation of which is, of course, a subject to critical reflection while its positive features deserves implementation into the new system of preschool education.

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