

CONGRATULATIONS

UDK 376.42(091«19»)(Graborov A. N.)
BBK Ч455.3(2)6-8
GSNTI 14.29.21
Code VAK 13.00.03

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Saint Petersburg, Russia

ALEKSEY NIKOLAYEVICH GRABOROV: AN OUTSTANDING RUSSIAN OLIGOPHRENOPEDAGOGUE (TO 130TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SCHOLAR)

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In March 2015, we are going to celebrate the 130th anniversary of the birth of the outstanding Russian oligophrenopedagogue, Doctor of Pedagogy, Professor Aleksey Nikolayevich Graborov (1885—1949).

A.N. Graborov is rightfully considered as the founder of the Russian oligophrenopedagogy and special school for children with intellectual disability. The scholar's

scientific legacy is still urgent; his printed works include textbooks, articles in collections of papers on defectological problems, and reports at different symposia.

The name of Aleksey Nikolaevich Graborov is closely connected with Saint Petersburg – Petrograd – Leningrad, where the scholar worked and lived most of his life and made a great contribution to the

formation and development of the Faculty of Special Pedagogy (the former Defectological Faculty) of the Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia, and the foundation of the Department of Oligophrenopedagogy (the department of education of children with intellectual disability).

Aleksey Nikolayevich Graborov was born on March 15 (March 2 by the Julian Calendar) 1885 in Roslavl, Smolensk Province [1]. He went to the Roslavl six-form City School and finished it in 1901; he began to give private lessons at the age of 15. Thus, the working career of the young man began rather early. His thirst for knowledge helped him to pass the graduation exams as an external student: in 1903 – for the degree of a parochial school teacher, in 1906 – for the degree of a county school teacher. But the real teacher's career of A.N. Graborov was continued in Saint Petersburg.

In 1906 he entered the P.F. Lesgaft Higher Free School where he studied until its closure in 1907. The life of Aleksey Nikolayevich was not an easy one. In order to pay for his board and tuition, he worked as a teacher at a school for children of unemployed parents and at evening courses for workers of the Kolomna literacy society.

In 1908 A.N. Graborov entered the Petersburg Psychoneurological Institute founded by V.

M. Bekhterev in 1907 and became student of the Natural Department of the Pedagogical Faculty, but continued to work to be able to pay for his study.

A.N. Graborov was a student of such famous scholars of that time as professors V. M. Bekhterev, A. S. Griboedov, A. F. Lazurskiy, P. F. Lesgaft and D. V. Fel'dberg. During his study, he got acquainted with the work of special educational institutions for children with intellectual disability opened in Saint Petersburg by E. K. Gracheva, I. V. Myalyarevskiy and his wife E. Kh. Myalyarevskaya and, later, with the activity of famous pedagogues and doctors: V. P. Kashchenko, N. P. Postovskiy and M. P. Postovskaya, and N. V. Chekhov. Thus formed Aleksey Nikolayevich his theoretical knowledge and accumulated his practical experience of work with children with intellectual disability.

In 1909-1914 A.N. Graborov taught at the courses of primary education, at children's clubs, and in summer, his activity was connected with out-of-school education of children; he worked as a tutor of children with intellectual disability who included children with severe intellectual disability. Private lessons helped A.N. Graborov to better understand the peculiarities of the psyche and behavior of such children, to study their developmental potential and to work out the meth-

ods of teaching intellectually disabled children.

From 1912, Aleksey Nikolayevich worked as a teacher of gymnastics and manual labor at a school for children with intellectual disability opened by the staff of the Psycho-neurological Institute. Unfortunately, the school was closed because of lack of funding in 1915. Then A.N. Graborov opened a private boarding school for children with intellectual disability. It was the beginning of his scientific, practical and public activity in the field of oligophrenopedagogy. After the October revolution of 1917 the school was handed over under the jurisdiction of the Soviet state and renamed into the Central Special School. Soon it became a base institution for conducting practice of the Defectological Faculty students. Being the School Headmaster, Aleksey Nikolayevich gave brilliant lessons himself demonstrating outstanding pedagogical skills of work with children with intellectual disability. Later, A.N. Graborov will sum up the experience of the school activity in his book “Special School (school for children with intellectual disability)” published in 1923 and 1925.

Beginning with the year 1914, Aleksey Nikolayevich Graborov often took part in conventions and conferences which discussed the issues of providing social assistance

to children with disabilities, clarified the notion “a disabled child”, considered the causes of intellectual disability of children and put forward propositions about creating various types of institutions necessary for education and upbringing of such children. At a number of such symposia, A.N. Graborov made reports on the problems of the essence of intellectual disabilities, their classification and social-labor education of children with intellectual disability. Thus, in 1919 he made a report at the First All-Russian Congress on Protection of Childhood about labor education at the new special school. In the future, he took an active part in the work of scientific congresses on the issues of teaching children with intellectual disabilities and difficult children.

From the first days of the Soviet power, A.N. Graborov paid special attention to establishing institutions for disabled children, carried out tremendous work towards training personnel for newly opened institutions for education of such children. He took part in the organization of various courses and gave lectures in labor education at a special school. A.N. Graborov’s lectures were published in the three-volume collection “Education and Upbringing of Disabled Children” (KSO, Petrograd, 1918).

Aleksey Nikolayevich was a

member of the medico-pedagogical consulting board of the *People's Commissariat for Education*; he took part in the work of the *I All-Russian Congress of Pedagogues on Childhood Protection (1919)*, the *I All-Russian Congress for Overcoming Child Disability and Crime (1920)*, the *All-Russian Conference on Overcoming Child Disability (1921)*, etc. He worked out a number of projects and programs for institutions caring for children with intellectual disability on the assignment of the *People's Commissariat for Education and the People's Commissariat for Social Welfare of the RSFSR and the Regional Department of People's Education*.

In his speeches and in the work of the medico-pedagogical consulting board at the Department of Childhood Protection of the *People's Commissariat for Education*, A.N. Graborov propagated theoretical foundations of the new pathological (therapeutic) pedagogy later described in the book "Special School". The Author writes in the foreword to the first publication (1923) that the expansion of the number of special schools after the October revolution brought about radical increase of the teaching personnel by engaging people untrained for education and even incapable of getting the necessary knowledge either from literature or practical experience even if they

wished to do so. "The given paper presents guidelines for those who work in the sphere of child disability and devote themselves to the exceptionally difficult task of education of children with intellectual disability" [2, p. 4]. Thus, the book by A.N. Graborov "Special School" was the first publication for teachers-defectologists dealing with the issues of education and upbringing of children with intellectual disability.

Aleksey Nikolayevich Graborov is not only a scholar in the theory of the system of special education, he was also one of the founders of the higher defectological education in the country. In October 1918, the Faculty of Training Personnel for Education of Disabled Children (called Disabled Children Faculty for short) was opened in Petrograd at the Institute of Pre-school Education. The Faculty was organized by Prof. A. S. Griboedov (the first Faculty Dean who held the position for some time), Prof. D. V. Fel'dberg (became Faculty Dean after A. S. Griboedov) and A.N. Graborov (Deputy Dean, Head of Department of Education of Children with Intellectual Disability).

In the 1920/21 school year, the Faculty was relocated at the Petrograd Pedagogical Institute of Social Education of typical and disabled children organized under the initiative of A.N. Graborov, A.

S. Griboedov and D. V. Fel'dberg, and received the name of the Faculty of Pathological Pedagogy; later it was renamed into the Faculty of Child Disability. In May 1921 the Institute was renamed into the Institute of Pedology and Defectology, and the Faculty of Child Disability began to be called the Defectological Faculty. After the 1925 merger of this Institute with the Leningrad Pedagogical Institute named after A.I. Herzen, A.N. Graborov was one of the founders of the Department of Education of Children with Intellectual Disability (later the Department of Oligophrenopedagogy), and became Head of this department. In 1925, by the decision of the State Learned Council of the People's Commissariat, A.N. Graborov was conferred the degree of professor in the course of "Intellectual Disability". He had been the member of the scientific-methodological committee of the Leningrad City Department of People's Education till 1925.

The Department of Education of Children with Intellectual Disability existed up to 1938; its faculty made a great contribution to the development of oligophrenopedagogy and training personnel for special schools. As a result of the closure of the Department, A.N. Graborov was dismissed. In 1938, he was offered the position of Head of Department of Oligophrenopeda-

gogy at the *Moscow State V. I. Lenin Pedagogical Institute*, where he had worked up to 1941.

In co-authorship with N. F. Kuz'mina and F. M. Novik, A.N. Graborov wrote the first textbook for students-defectologists "Oligophrenopedagogy" to be published in the Soviet Union (1941). This textbook defines oligophrenopedagogy as a science about education, upbringing and teaching of children with intellectual disability in connection with the tasks of rehabilitation of developmental disorders and formulates its basic principles. Rehabilitation is looked upon as an inseparable aspect of educational activity of a special school. An exceptional place in the system of rehabilitation activity is allotted to labor which is considered not only as a means of vocational training of the pupils but also as a tool of general education.

During the Great Patriotic War, A.N. Graborov continued his pedagogical activity in evacuation, first in Gorky and then in Bashkhir Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, where he worked as Head of Department of Pedagogy at Birsik State Pedagogical Institute. In 1943, the Scientific-Research Institute of Defectology of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the RSFSR was established, and A.N. Graborov was asked to come to Moscow to work at this Institute. He was also

invited to teach the course of oligophrenopedagogy and the course of methods of teaching Russian at special schools in the *Moscow State V. I. Lenin Pedagogical Institute*.

In June 1946, A.N. Graborov successfully defended a doctoral dissertation in Pedagogy summing up the achievements of the theory and practice of education of children with intellectual disability in the Soviet Union.

The further activity of Aleksey Nikolayevich was again connected with Leningrad. In August 1946 he was employed as Head of the Section of Oligophrenopedagogy at the Leningrad Scientific-Research Institute of Special Schools of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the RSFSR and Head of Department of General Pedagogy at the First Pedagogical Institute of Foreign Languages.

Much was done under the guidance of A.N. Graborov in the study of children with intellectual disability; he organized a clinic which facilitated the determination of psychological peculiarities of such children and realization of the differentiated approach to them in the process of education. Simultaneously, A.N. Graborov was a scientific adviser of post-graduate students, gave consultations for teachers of special schools on teaching methods and carried out extensive work with the parents of children

with intellectual disability. He organized the first course of lectures on intellectual disability and gave lectures to the parents of children with intellectual disability himself. In addition to this, the scholar gave lectures for teachers and pupils of senior forms as he considered propagation of pedagogical knowledge among people to be a matter of his social duty and an obligation of each teacher.

Aleksey Nikolayevich Graborov was a highly gifted person. From the time when he was a student he was keen on musical and theatrical art and took an active part in performing activity. He was distinguished by many talents: he was very good at drawing, went in for photography, was good at clay modeling and taught it to his pupils, and had skills of carpentry and bookbinding. He was always eager to pass his labor habits and skills to other people.

A.N. Graborov was an energetic and creative scholar whose activity was urgent and always in demand. In his works, he raised many critical issues, but premature death did not let him realize all his plans. Aleksey Nikolayevich died on April 24, 1949 and was buried at the Volkovo Lutheran cemetery in Leningrad. A.N. Graborov left a rich scientific heritage, but, unfortunately, many of his works have not been published.

The analysis of the published works demonstrates the problems and mistakes in the development of the new science of oligophrenopedagogy which could be attributed, to a certain extent, to the historical situation. The further scientific analysis of theoretical conceptions of A.N. Graborov can make it possible to throw light upon many issues of the history of development of the special school and the Russian oligophrenopedagogy.

Stressing the significance of A.N. Graborov's activity, G. M. Dul'nev wrote: "A.N. Graborov had gone a long and difficult way along the road of creative investigation, hesitation and success. He was one of the first creators of our home science about the education of children with intellectual disability... The works by A.N. Graborov are still to be deeply analyzed with the aim of both using his achievements in practice, and writing a chapter in the history of Soviet oligophrenopedagogy" [3, p. 11].

At present, when so many years have passed, we have every right to say that A.N. Graborov's activity makes up a whole chapter of not only Soviet but common Russian oligophrenopedagogy. "A brilliant pedagogue and scholar, Aleksey Nikolayevich Graborov created special systems of methods of teaching and upbringing pupils with intellectual disabilities. In his

lectures and publications, he answered many questions which interested researchers and practical workers both in the past and in the present." [4, p. 17].

The cause of Aleksey Nikolaevich Graborov is being continued at the Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia today: the Department of Oligophrenopedagogy, once created by A.N. Graborov was reopened in 1965. This became possible due to ceaseless effort of his former post-graduate student, and later Dean of the Defectological Faculty, Candidate of Pedagogy, Associate Professor Nataliya Petrovna Dolgoborodova. At present, the conduct of Graborov readings and scientific-practical conferences devoted to the life and scientific activity of the scholar and his contribution to the development of Russian oligophrenopedagogy at the Faculty of Special Pedagogy has become a good tradition.

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