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SOCIO-MORAL DEVELOPMENT OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN: SOME ASPECTS OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

Abstract. The article considers the issues of socio-moral education and development of preschool children. A theoretical survey of the modern state of the given area of investigation made it possible to make a conclusion that today the communitary approach to moral education focusing on the ideas of social order and facilitating the development of social ties and formation of collectivism becomes the dominant one. This purpose is reflected in the modern normative documents: the Federal Law “On Education in the Russian Federation”, “The Concept of Spiritual-Moral Development and Education of the Personality of a Citizen of Russia”, and federal state educational standards. Analysis of theoretical and practice-oriented research in the given area shows that the word combination “moral education” is gradually replaced today by “socio-moral education” and “socio-moral development”. The same tendency is found in preschool pedagogy as well (see the works of such authors as L. V. Abramova, R. S. Bure, S. M. Zyryanova, N. A. Karateva, G. M. Kiseleva, I. F. Sleptsova, etc.). It is the study of socio-moral ideas of preschool children that the majority of modern diagnostic procedures are aimed at: to explain the actions children perform and their relations with each other and adults, to assess these actions (i.e. to correlate the situation with the moral norm). The corresponding study of senior preschool children showed that the respondents involved in the discussion of the children’s actions actively and interestedly, because the situations under analysis were relative to their own experience. Correlation of the situation with a certain moral norm appeared to be more difficult for the children, but it is this component that ensures the communitary orientation of socio-moral development of the growing generation. In general, this fact does not only demonstrate the ideas of children and their acquired rules of behavior in a micro-society, but also gives ground for more precise planning of the work of the tutors and parents in the aspect of socio-moral education.

Keywords: socio-moral education; socio-moral development; morality; preschool children; communitary approach; socialization of children.

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The issues of moral education of the growing generation have always been of prime importance for pedagogy. Such outstanding pedagogues of the past as J. A. Comenius, J. J. Rousseau, K. D. Ushinskiy, L. N. Tolstoy, V. A. Sukhomlinskiy and many others addressed the problems of formation of morals and morality in this or that way.

Four traditions can be identified in the process of understanding of the foundations of moral education: paternalist (presupposing respect of the older people as an obligatory component); religious-spiritual (based on the authority of faith and church); enlightenment (including active acquisition of scientific knowledge subject to the judgment of reason); and communitary (proceeding from the idea of social order that facilitates the development of social ties and formation of collectivism). The significant social change that took place in the late 20th – early 21st centuries (globali-

zation, mass informatization, openness, disintegration of the old ideology, etc.) has lead to the situation in which the communitary approach dominates moral education.

This is quite saliently suggested even by the terms and notions most frequently used in pedagogical theory and practice. The Federal Law “On Education in the Russian Federation” (2012) focuses on the moral-spiritual development, perfection, moral-spiritual culture and the corresponding values [13]. “The Concept of Spiritual-Moral Development and Education of the Personality of a Citizen of Russia” adopted in 2009 is sure to have influenced the situation as well [4].

Today, the word combination “moral education” is gradually replaced by “socio-moral education” and “socio-moral development”. Such substitution stresses the idea that morality is understood not only as a complex of norms determining the behavior of one person but as a

certain mechanism regulating the life of a concrete society, as well as the interaction between individual and groups of individuals and their attitude to social phenomena and life as a whole (A. V. Arkhangel'skiy, O. G. Drobnitskiy, E. V. Korotayeva, I. S. Mar'yenko, P. L. Troshin, I. F. Kharlamov, D. I. Fel'dshcheyn, etc.).

The same tendency is found in preschool pedagogy as well (see the works of such authors as R. S. Bure, N. E. Veraksa, A. G. Gogoberidze, L. V. Kolomyichenko, V. G. Nechayeva, I. F. Sleptsova, etc.). Thus, the federal state requirements to the structure of the basic general education program of preschool education (2010) [3] outlined the educational area "Socialization" which had a fuzzy name and was placed fourth in the list of ten educational areas. But the Federal State Educational Standards for preschool education (2013) already mark socio-communicative development as a priority direction heading the list of five educational areas. And the content of this area is revealed through moral and spiritual values, development of social and emotional intellect, emotional responsiveness, empathy, formation of respect and the feeling of belonging to one's family and the community of children and adults in the preschool institution [13].

The given approach cannot have failed to be reflected in the corre-

sponding programs designed for practical preschool education. For example, "The Typical Program of Education and Upbringing in the Kindergarten" (edited by M. A. Vasil'yeva) had a strong ideological bias, and the section devoted to moral education of preschool children was too laconic and did not match the real facts of social life. Whereas the model program "From Birth till School Age" [7] gives a clear-cut structure of the working area of the socio-communicative development of the preschool child comprising:

- acquisition of the norms and values accepted in society, education of moral and spiritual properties of the child, formation of the skills of assessment of their own actions and those of their peers;
- formation of readiness for joint activity, development of the skills to negotiate and resolve conflicts with the peers independently;
- development of emotional responsiveness, empathy, respect and kind attitude towards the surrounding people;
- formation of the image of one's own "Ego" in the family, in the institution, in the children's and adult communities, etc.

It is worthy of note that the model educational programs for preschool education do not use the word combination "moral-spiritual", but contain an orientation towards "socio-moral development

and education” (L. V. Abramova, R. S. Bure, S. M. Zyryanova, N. A. Karatayeva, G. M. Kiseleva, I. F. Sleptsova, etc.). It is not by chance that the diagnostic procedures that allow measuring the level of moral development of the preschooler are based on attempts to understand the situations of communication and the contacts with peers and adults. It especially stresses the socio-moral orientation of diagnostics.

The children are offered four situations (for example: *Petya and Vova were playing together and broke a nice expensive toy. Father*

came and asked, “Who has broken the toy?” Then Petya said ... What did Petya say? Why? What did Petya do? Why? [11, pp. 59-61]. Each situation has a problem of choice, as well as an urging both to explain the action of a concrete child and to sum up the situation on the whole.

Drawing on the given diagnostic procedure of G. A. Uruntayeva and Yu. A. Afon’kina, we carried out a corresponding study of the moral concepts of senior preschool children in one of the kindergartens of Ekaterinburg.

Table 1. Results of the test of moral concepts of senior preschool children

Respondent	Names the moral norm				Assesses the behavior of the children				Assesses the motivation				Total
	№1	№2	№3	№4	№1	№2	№3	№4	№1	№2	№3	№4	
Lyubov’ S.	–	–	–	1	–	1	–	1	–	1	–	1	5
Anna Z.	1	1	–	–	1	1	–	1	–	–	–	1	6
Nikita K.	1	–	–	1	1	1	1	1	1	–	–	1	8
Konstantin L.	–	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	–	–	–	1	8
Timofey T.	–	1	1	1	–	1	1	1	–	1	1	–	8
Aleksey SH.	–	–	–	–	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
Evgeniy M.	1	–	1	1	1	1	1	1	–	–	1	1	9
Anastasiya P.	1	1	1	–	1	1	1	1	1	–	1	–	9
Egor B.	1	1	1	–	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	–	10
Vladimir L.	1	1	1	–	1	1	1	1	–	1	1	1	10
Ekaterina N.	1	1	–	–	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Sof’ya P.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	–	–	1	1	10
Mark R.	1	–	1	–	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Arseniy G.	–	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Semen D.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	–	1	11
Evgeniy K.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	–	1	1	11
Matvey CH.	–	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Polina CH.	1	1	1	–	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Marina SH.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	–	1	11
Irina B.	1	1	1	–	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Dmitriy K.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	12
Anna S.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	12
	16	17	17	13	20	22	20	22	15	15	16	19	

The assessment scale included the following quantitative and qualitative indicators: 0 scores – refuses to answer, 1 score – gives assessment of the children's actions in a concrete situation and provides an explanation, even an assessment of the action (behavior) of the children on the whole.

The quantitative analysis of the data obtained is shown in the table.

As seen from the table, it was rather easy for the preschoolers to assess the actions and behavior of the children in the situations under discussion. This column shows the greatest number of full answers (sum total is 84), whereas explanation of the motives (sum total is 65) and correlation of the actions with a moral norm (sum total is 63) lag considerably behind.

25% of preschoolers avoided explaining why an action could be regarded good or bad: they kept silent, or answered, "I don't know." etc. This fact means that preschoolers correlate concrete situations with their personal experience which already contains corresponding assessments on the part of adults or other children. And sometimes children are reluctant to give indirect assessment of their own deeds via discussion of "somebody else's" situations.

What is more, far from all senior preschoolers can associate concrete actions with a generally accepted moral norm. Quite often the as-

essment of actions in a socio-moral situation depends on the subsequent expectancies of the children, in which they again proceed from personal experience.

Thus, while explaining why a boy lied in a certain situation, part of the preschoolers said that he "got frightened", "was afraid he would be blamed", "would be punished", etc. This fact proves that the children are familiar with the consequences of morally disapproved actions. We believe that it is worth while observing these particular children and their relations with the parents: the latter may be too strict after all, and it would be good to see whether they take into consideration the age-related boundaries of perception of socio-moral norms at the preschool age.

Nevertheless, there were answers quite "mature" for the given age: "One has to confess" (of something done), "because it is necessary to share", "because girls always give in", "because the girl has good manners" (!), "was wrong because you mustn't lie!".

The table shows that two children (at the top of the list) have rather serious problems with socio-moral development – they have scored only 5 and 6 points out of 12. And only two children have scored the maximum number of points. But on the whole, the socio-moral atmosphere in the given group is relatively satisfactory:

more than half of the children take active part in the talks about morals, give a correct assessment of the socio-moral vector of an action, and assess it properly. And with due work on the part of the teacher, this leads to the formation of the concepts not about a concrete action but about the moral behavioral norm accepted both in the micro- and in the macro-society.

For preservation of the socio-moral vector in education and development of preschool children, we can recommend the preschool teachers to work out a program that presupposes four consecutive stages:

1) “This is Me”: to help the child form the image of themselves, outline their personality traits, understand themselves as a subject of activity (learning, labor, communicative, etc.);

2) “Me and You”: to teach preschoolers to establish dialogue with peers, to help to treat the communication partner as a friend, to correct one’s concepts about moral behavior (one’s own and that of other people);

3) “Me and We”: to expand the child’s concepts about oneself as a part of community (group), to identify the zone of comfort and the risk zone in communication and interaction with peers and adults, to accept the rules of social interaction;

4) “Me and the World”: to lead to the understanding of the child’s

inclusion in the socio-cultural space (of the kindergarten, school, family, micro-society, etc.) which is vitally important in the pre-school period, to prepare for the new social stage – schooling, for new social contacts, new social role, realization of the value of education, etc.

By way of summing up, we would like to say the following.

Any science, and specifically pedagogy develops effectively only in interaction between the corresponding theory and practice. The communitary tradition in the organization of moral development and education of preschool children both in the scientific approaches and in practical activity facilitates careful attitude towards the surrounding people, considerate forms of interaction with the peers, acceptance and realization of the moral norms and rules regulating the behavior and relationships of all subjects of the education process, etc. It is the approach that can be rightfully defined as the “area of socio-moral development of preschool children”.

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