



History of Creation (Organization) of Pedagogical Classes in the Orenburg Region (Russia) in the 1920s and 1930s

Historia de la creación (organización) de clases pedagógicas en la región de Orenburg en las décadas de 1920 y 1930

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ABSTRACT:

The author analyzes the history of teacher training in Orenburg in the 1920s and 1930s through the introduction of the pedagogical bias in second level schools. The author states that the organization of pedagogical classes was an effective form of pedagogical career guidance and acquaintance of students with pedagogical culture. The conclusion is that the organization of pedagogical classes helps to successfully solve problems of modern school related to the professional self-determination of senior pupils.

Keywords: pedagogical bias, professional courses, pedagogical classes, career guidance, second level school

RESUMEN:

El autor analiza la historia de la formación docente en Orenburg en las décadas de 1920 y 1930 a través de la introducción del sesgo pedagógico en las escuelas de segundo nivel. El autor afirma que la organización de clases pedagógicas era una forma efectiva de orientación profesional pedagógica y conocimiento de los estudiantes con cultura pedagógica. La conclusión es que la organización de clases pedagógicas ayuda a resolver con éxito los problemas de la escuela moderna relacionados con la autodeterminación profesional de los alumnos mayores.

Palabras clave: sesgo pedagógico, cursos profesionales, clases pedagógicas, orientación profesional, escuela de segundo nivel.

1. Introduction

In the 1920s the Soviet school began to transform second level school into the "true, labor and polytechnic school" preserving its status as school whereas a university was to become its successor. In the 1920s and 1930s, professional courses in general and pedagogical biases in particular were introduced into the work of Orenburg schools to perform the transformation. In addition, the school had a very pragmatic aim to train as many teachers as possible for primary school (first level school). Another goal was to help pupils in their professional self-determination. It was stated that "...the abilities that are necessary for any profession can manifest at school during the learning process of a pupil and, therefore, school always has the opportunity to give a

certain professional orientation. First of all, school can promote a more conscious analysis...of professions by making students acquainted with the nature of work, its conditions... Introduction of professional courses into the second stage (concentr) of school education ... meets students' needs" (Kalashnikov, 1930).

2. Results

The problems of pedagogical biases were connected with the second level school requirements and concerned the following themes:

1. Provision of a general polytechnic education, which was supposed to lead a school leaver to "conscious understanding and participation in public life, struggle and construction of the society"
2. Preparation for admission to universities
3. Certain set of practical knowledge and skills provision so that a school leaver "could immediately find work in a particular industry" (Kalashnikov, 1930).

The question of pedagogical biases and professional courses was raised at the beginning of 1920, when the issue of the so-called "polyfurcation" (academic streaming) of the second level was considered.

A more detailed discussion of the need for professionalization took place at the meeting of the People's Commissariat for Education in July 1924. The decision "about reorganization of second level school in connection with the foundations of school formation of RSFSR" was made. The second stage of school education (VIII-IX groups) was professionalized. A system of professional courses was determined, including the pedagogical special courses (O reorganizatsii shkoly II stupeni v svyazi s osnovami shkolnogo stroitelstva RSFSR, 1924).

In July 1925 the all-Russian conference on second level school gave the following meaning of the second stage professionalization: "the essence of the second stage professionalization is to set a goal to prepare a massive, full-fledged, qualified, conscientious worker of a certain profession. However, ensuring nine-year general (polytechnic) education so that each pupil at the end of the second level can master the necessary training not only for any practical work, but also for possible admission to the university, is an indispensable condition for the professionalization" (Voprosy shkoly II stupeni, 1926). The resolution adopted at the conference identified the main areas of work needed to be professionalized. Among the cooperative, administrative-soviet, agricultural "activity" they spoke about social and educational activity, which included preschool, school and political-educational directions.

The conference touched upon the practice issue. Practice was interpreted as an obligatory condition to obtain "really trained workers" (Voprosy shkoly II stupeni, 1926). However, there was a total conviction that professional courses connect school with life through "industrial local studies". This link would become stronger, as it was supposed to take into account the needs of the region and the country for the workers of a certain profession.

The SAC (the State Academic Council) directives were adopted at the discussion in the educational sphere centered on professional courses, curricula and practice. They implied that a secondary school should follow the practice path, professional courses should have a certain objective, curricula should comply with the stated aim, and this also was relevant to practice.

The cultural-pedagogical bias was aimed at training first level school personnel, political-educational department offices and kindergarten staff. In the beginning, it was decided not to introduce the specialization at once. The reason given for it was that rural school teachers had to know the foundations of preschool preparation and political-educational work. Specialization introduction was postponed to the second half of 9th year of study.

Second stage professionalization of second level school in the Orenburg governorate started to be implemented as soon as possible. In September 1925 the Orenburg County Department of Public Education (CDPE) held a specific meeting with the state and economic authority representatives. The meeting decided to implement the "Professional directives" at the second stage of second level school in the current school year (1925/26) (Khronika po prosveshcheniyu, 1925). The first place in the list was occupied by the "social-pedagogical directive" (other directives that were mentioned included the accounting cooperative, state insurance and agricultural credit cooperation services directives)

The school councils were instructed to work out the curricula for the reformed school. Preliminarily, it was determined that 26 hours a week were to be spent on teaching general education subjects and 10 hours a week on special ones (8th grade); for the 9th grade - 24 and

12 hours a week respectively (Khronika po prosveshcheniyu, 1925). The need for practice was determined as well.

The necessity of implementing the pedagogical bias in second level school, the requirements to expand their network and to enhance the pupils' training was caused by a huge demand for first level school teachers. According to the mapped-out plans, from the 1926/27 to 1933/34 school years in the Orenburg governorate in order to provide a growing network of primary education with pedagogical personnel, 1,209 teachers were required only for Russian schools, 449 specialists were needed to fill the natural decline, which amounted to 1,658 people (Trushkov, 1926).

Teachers for primary schools were trained only at three educational institutions on the territory of the governorate in 1926: The Russian Pedagogical College, the Tatar Pedagogical School and the Pedagogical Courses. They could not perform the task. Even parallel pedagogical courses organized at the Russian Pedagogical College in 1926 could not solve the problem as the lack of teachers was filled only by 44.5%. The listed educational institutions could prepare only 760-780 trained teachers for the governorate.

Teachers were trained for Russian primary schools only in classes with pedagogical bias. The national schools issue was expected to be solved by introducing parallels in the Tatar pedagogical college and by attracting teaching personnel from other governorates where there were educational institutions that trained teachers for Ukrainian and Mordovian schools.

The problem of pedagogical bias was considered at the central level. Thus, at the XIII All-Russia Congress of Soviets that took place in April 1927 it was stated that second level school with the pedagogical bias played an important role in teachers training for the expanded network of primary schools. The main requirements for graduates from schools with the pedagogical bias were formulated at the Congress. They were related not only to the training quality but also to the social status: "The Congress of Soviets acknowledges the necessity of improved social composition of advanced schools and considers it necessary to implement scholarship programs from the state and local budgets for the poorest children at the advanced schools, and especially ... at the second level school with pedagogical bias" (XIII Vserossiyskiy Syezd Sovet: stenograf. otchet, 1927).

In the beginning, the implementation of professional courses was accompanied with great difficulties. The reorganization should be undertaken in accordance with well-thought-out plans which would not upset the balance of general educational subjects and there were none of them available. Besides there was no pedagogical staff well-trained for such kind of work. Only in the 1927/1928 school year the situation changed for the better. The SAC programs for the pedagogical schools were introduced at Orenburg region schools.

The programs were delivered in 6 series with the instructions for practice undertaking with a clearly defined aim: to finish the general educational training of a student during the course of nine-year school, ... to prepare them for teaching positions at first level school" (Brodsкая, 1928).

The first objective was dictated by the fact that the higher education crisis became evident. Higher education institutes faced the second level school graduates' inability to meet the requirements for the applicants at the entrance examinations.

By 1928 there were 24 second level schools in Orenburg. None of these schools managed to prepare graduates who met the standards of higher education institutes. The admission campaign of 1927 had deplorable results. The Leningrad Institute of the National Economy admitted only 22 per cent of the 2nd level school graduates; the Leningrad Polytechnic Institute – admitted 28 per cent; the Moscow State University admitted 6 per cent; the Moscow High Technical School admitted 18 %.

The problem of improving the quality of general education was relevant both for those graduates of nine-year school who planned to enter higher education institutes, and for those who claimed the status of a qualified professional. The situation was so serious that it caused an emergency meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The issue of the second stage of school education was raised at the meeting.

In the 1927/28 school year Orenburg schools No.1 and No.8 introduced the pedagogical bias in their curriculum. It was based on 'the pedagogical syllabus' and included the following parts – "The Contents and Methodology of Teaching at first level school" and "The Basic Methods of Teaching the Russian Language and Mathematics".

The topics of the lessons were manifold and included both the theoretical and the practical components. For example, while studying the topic "The Main

Types of the National Educational Institutions”, the students visited a number of educational institutes of Orenburg such as kindergartens, literacy schools, clubs for workers, civil servants and peasants.

A Komsomol employee responsible for the children’s movement in Orenburg was charged with the task of teaching the topic “The Children’s Communist Movement”.

The 9th groups paid special attention to training special methodology skills such as the methodology of literacy training, organizing conversations, mathematics methodology.

Orenburg teachers did not try to conceal the fact that a great part of ‘the pedagogical syllabus’ requirements were impossible to meet. This is true with regard to the tasks of the following type – “make a draft of a regional studies museum at the 1st level school, make a draft of a laboratory corner, make drafts of classroom design, make drafts of training programs for various skill development (school drama, verse recitation, etc.), etc.” (Brodskaya, 1928).

The practical component at Orenburg schools was organized in the following way: all the students of the 8th group were attached to the groups of the first level schools. They visited schools once a week. Students of classes with the pedagogical bias made notes at the lessons, which they later discussed at conferences.

The practical component of the 9th groups consisted in observing the educational process of the first level school and creating a chronological report on the educational process. In October or November the trainees started to conduct lessons on their own.

Once, and then twice a week, students of the pedagogical bias visited the school they were attached to. The trainees conducted lessons, took part in club events and excursions, studied the management process, for example, visited the meetings of the school board.

The trainees were monitored by methodology specialists. The lessons were analyzed at conferences. The feedback was organized with the help of questionnaires. One of the questionnaires for the students of the 9th groups requested them to point out the defects. Among the defects the trainees mentioned the monotonous methods of teaching at the first level school, the shortage of trial lessons, etc.

3. Conclusions

To conclude the review of the history of the pedagogical bias introduction to the Orenburg schools, we may say that this practice was introduced in time, aroused keen interest within teachers’ community, including top managers of the national education, working teachers, methodology specialists and students who were members of groups with the pedagogical bias. We believe that even nowadays the introduction of pedagogical classes could contribute significantly to the successful solution to the modern school’s problems connected with the professional development of senior school student.

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