

Developmental Education and its Relevance to the Russian Innovative Pedagogy¹

O ensino desenvolvimental e sua relevância para a pedagogia inovadora russa

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RESUMO

Este artigo representa uma discussão sobre o Ensino Desenvolvimental (ED) na Rússia. Os autores assumem que o ED ajuda a atualizar as idéias oferecidas pelo escritor russo Lev Tolstoy do século XIX em sua passagem pelas teorias pedagógicas de Vladimir Repkin, Daniil Elkonin e Vasily Davydov. As opções russas de ED diferem das práticas educacionais estrangeiras, que são aplicadas no campo do ensino superior. Na Rússia, o ED pressupõe atitudes interativas entre professores e alunos. Esse modelo descreve uma situação na educação elementar russa e em estruturas de educação adicional. Os autores analisam a história da formação em ED sobre a experiência acumulada pelos cientistas russos. Em geral, os autores concluem que o Ensino Desenvolvimental demonstra as tendências humanistas em vez do aumento das atitudes mecanicistas de cunho enciclopédico existentes nas formas tradicionais de educação.

Palavras-chave: Ensino Desenvolvimental. Inovações. Tradições. Humanismo. Clássicos. Legado antigo. Educação moderna. Atitudes interativas.

ABSTRACT

This article represents a discussion about Developmental Education (DE) in Russia. Authors assume that DE helps to actualize ideas offered by the 19th century Russian writer Lev Tolstoy at their crossing with the pedagogical theories by Vladimir Repkin, Daniil Elkonin, and Vasily Davydov. The Russian options of DE differ from the foreign educational practices, which are applied in the field of the higher education. In Russia, DE presupposes the interactive attitudes among teachers and students. This model describes a situation in the Russian elementary education and in structures of additional education. Authors analyze the history of the DE forming concerning the experience accumulated by the Russian scientists. In general, authors make the conclusion that Developmental Education demonstrates the humanist tendencies instead of the mechanical increase of the encyclopedic foundations in traditional forms of education.

Keywords: Developmental Education. Innovations. Traditions. Humanism. Classics. Ancient legacy Modern education. Interactive attitudes.

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1 Introdução

The Developmental Education (DE) is a model of research for description of the active methods of teaching in particular as for the higher education (BAILET, 2009; ATTEWELL; LAVIN; DOMINA; LEVEY, 2006; BETTINGER; LONG, 2009; BALIET; JEONG; CHO, 2010). In Russia, DE demonstrates its features in the elementary education. DE is based here on the concept, which was developed in the 1960-80-ies by a large group of Russian psychologists, methodologists and teachers under the leadership of Daniil B. Elkonin and Vasily V. Davydov. The forms, content and methods of DE are focused on the patterns of students' development. The organization of such training is a difficult problem. The basis of DE is a learning activity, which is the special form of student activity aimed at changing of a student himself as a subject of teaching. It is the participation of a child in the learning process as an active subject of the learning activity that distinguishes DE from all other teacher's pedagogical influences. The main object of the DE is turning the child to the subject of the study who is interested in self-changing. The peculiarity of the object determines the features of the content, methods, forms of academic communication, as well as the parameters and criteria for evaluating the success of training. The decisive factor for the organization of active learning activities is the content of teaching and the students' understanding of a given material.

The forming of *interactive attitudes* between a teacher and a student in the process of the Developmental Education is inevitable. The more professionally, carefully and precisely the teacher organizes the training school activity of students, the greater their chances to success in this training. The idea of Developmental Education, which has entered in the active phase of its spreading at the end of 20th century, originated theoretically in the 19th century and was tested in a single test in a certain school. In the late 1850s, by this time, a famous writer but not a professional teacher Lev Tolstoy founded in Yasnaya Polyana a school for peasant children. In the school, Lev Tolstoy gave lessons of mathematics, history and other subjects. He wanted to eradicate the

authoritarianism and to establish partnership relations with students in his school. Now we call it Developmental Education or *Pedagogy of Cooperation* that presupposes a joint activity of the teacher and his students.

The cooperation attitudes suggest a particular style of pedagogical communication, completely eliminating manifestations of authoritarianism in any form. The implementation of Developmental Education into the pedagogical style is the difficult psychological task. The main propositions of the theory of the Developmental Education presuppose the organization, by a teacher, of the process of educational activity in cooperation with the students but not instead of them. The teacher is an ordinary member who expresses his hypotheses, opinions, suggestions but who do not compels students to accept his point of view as the only correct one. This cooperation means the integration of two activities in the process of teaching and learning, which is respectively the activities of teacher and student.

The innovatory school made by Tolstoy was an example for the demonstration of unusual educational institution. Lev Tolstoy was a century ahead and anticipated the basics of Developmental Education. He believed that the main goal is not to lead students, but give them the right to choose what to do. The students allowed choosing classes in their primary interests, for instance, to write essays on the theme of Russian folk proverbs, to think of the development of the plot, and to use the right phraseology, which as they think is the most suitable. Tolstoy as a teacher did not become the dominant leader, but he became an equal partner of the process of writing the story according to the proverb, which contributed to the interest of the students and involved a lot of children in the writing. The writer paid his attention to the children's writings on Russian proverbs, which were selected by the students themselves, in order to develop the natural predisposition of peasant children to the precise and imaginative folk speech, focusing on the potential of his students. In *Leaning to write: peasant children learning from us or should we learn from them?* Tolstoy described the process of writing the story to the proverb, which means to reproach someone for the food he eats under your roof. Tolstoy explained to his

students the meaning of the proverb, and then he wrote the first page of the story and discussed the following plan with them. Almost all the students took part in the composition of the story, but very soon, the majority of the children did not want to continue to work, and there left only two boys who were interested in writing.

Lev Tolstoy did not know the conceptual foundations of pedagogy of Developmental Education. He felt intuitively that the most effective form of communication with students would be cooperation, partnership, and equitable fellowship of the adult educator and peasant children. There were some disagreements in the process of writing the story when a teacher wanted to comply with the requirements of logic and sequence of construction for saving the main thought of proverbs in the emerging story. The students however fulfilled the requirements of the artistic truth and style of traditional speech. The final of the story was achieved by joint deliberation and searching for the best way of designing of the work. Tolstoy organized a pedagogical journal *Yasnaya Polyana*, which had an annex where appeared a new section ‘peasant children works’, which published some stories of his students Morozova, Rumyantsev and Sokolov and others (TOLSTOY, 1980).

School in Yasnaya Polyana was an original teaching laboratory, which had the following mandatory norms for teachers:

- . the development of observation, mental abilities of children, teaching them to feel deeply;
- . the stimulation of children’s activity and creativity;
- . the esteem and appreciation of the child’s personality;
- . the avoidance of any violence and oppression of children.

The norms maintained by Lev Tolstoy were implemented in a favorable atmosphere in the school. Teachers discussed the progress of the educational process. They took into consideration the mood and behavior of children, their motivation for classes and students’ reaction to the various methods of teaching, and to the teachers on the relationship with the children. The analytical reports of teachers fixed all the stages of students’ development: their achievements,

changes in behaviors, and the results were published in the journal *Yasnaya Polyana*, which was read with great interest by the teachers of other schools. This unusual for the 19th century humanistic innovative practice made by Tolstoy, which took into account the interests of the student, could not get the approval of his contemporaries, the supporters of authoritarian pedagogy.

Vladimir Repkin was one of the founders of the theory and techniques of 20th century Developmental Education. He has solved the problem of education in accordance with the principles of the psychological theory of activity since 1930s until 1960s. Repkin unfolded the experimental work, then found some like-minded people and designed the training system based on developing education. In Russia, the Developmental Education has received the widespread popularity after 1988 when hundreds of similar classes in many cities of the country appeared. In Tomsk, the education centers based on Developmental Education were opened corresponding to ideas proposed by Elkonin and Davydov (REPKIN, 1997). In nowadays educational space of Tomsk, an interest in Developmental Education is demonstrated not only for certain teachers but also for entire institutions.

We should analyze the history and current state of such schools as Eureka Development, School Joint Ventures (school No. 49) and innovative extracurricular institution Tomsk Hobby Center to find out the realization of Developmental Education in Tomsk. Actualization of Developmental Education as a characteristic feature of education in all these institutions began in 1989-1991. A deviation from the traditional reproductive schools and ideologically informative forms of education became possible only with the weakening of the restrictive measures of the Soviet era. This allowed the initiative groups of teachers to implement their own ideas about the desired methods of work with children. As the result, ideas have laid the foundation of new type of educational institutions.

Eureka Development is the school based on the concept of innovative teaching technologies. This school was originated at club meetings of teachers and parents. The leader of this club, entitled “Break” (1988-1990), was Tatyana

M. Kovaleva, a teacher; a Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor now. The Director of Eureka Development Lyudmila M. Dolgovaya has noted that during the discussions of the idea the requirements of children parents and teachers were clarified. These requirements were the conditions for the creation and development of the intellect. Their realization could provide the preservation of the child's desire to attend classes and environment of cooperation maintenance. The bulk of parents believed that it is important to create some places of children activity development, and this idea was connected with the need of transition to the Developmental Education according to the system of Elkonin-Davydov. Nowadays this school however is poly-systemic and keeps its developing directions (DOLGOVA, 2009). Administration of Eureka Development has organized the Pedagogical Workshops in 1991. These Workshops provided the familiarization with the works of the great teachers including Lev Tolstoy for teachers. The teachers under the direction of Lyudmila M. Dolgovaya have implemented since 1993 until 1994 the project entitled "Free Classes of pedagogy focused on school of Tolstoy's" aimed at non-violent involvement of a child in the learning process. The implementation of noted idea was promoted by the organization of Saturdays Studies where students could select classes according to their interests. It could be a biology lesson, guitar classes, choral and individual singing of popular songs, dramatization of fairy tales or a club for young mathematicians. The main thing was to observe the principle of voluntary choice and participation of children in the most attractive kinds of cognitive and developmental activities during the visit at the obligatory school day. The authors of the project used the idea of Developmental Education based on the experience of Lev Tolstoy, Maria Montessori, Vladimir S. Bibler and other classics of pedagogy. The project developed a poly-systematic practice of working with children, which is based on the Principle of Individualization. This was possible because of the small number of schoolchildren in the school: there were 520 students in 2014-2015 academic years.

The emergence of the Developmental Education that was actualized in the school No. 49 took place in the mid-1980s when the understanding of the

necessity of educational work reforming united the creative teachers in the initiative group under the direction of Galina N. Prozumentova who is the doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor of Tomsk State University. The developed concept focused on developing education allowed opening Joint Venture School in 1990 (NIKITINA; POZDEEVA, 2015) The essence of Developmental Education in this school lied in the manifestation of the appointed training and extra-curricular activity of children. The teacher encouraged children's initiatives that result in projects. The children worked actively in the available usual school teams and extracurricular school teams, and created their own teams as well.

Developmental Education shows some interesting features in the school No. 49. The development of children during the classes is carried out in the process of coping with the joint activities samples; for instance, the program of a worker of the school No. 49, Professor Elena A. Rumbeshta, prepares students to solve educational problems. In turn, the class work allows children to initiate some forms of joint activity. In all groups a realization of Developmental Education takes place but in different ways. The Council of the schoolchildren thus learns to make unconventional decisions concerning the life of the institution. The design work takes place in teams of ecological orientation, and the students themselves determine design themes. That is why Developmental Education in the school No. 49 is the development of not only a certain child but also groups of children, for instance, through self-management in the classroom. As a result, in the school № 49, the formation of joint activities groups is realized. Firstly, *a study group* is formed where children interact actively but management functions belong to the teacher. Then *problem groups* are organized in which the teacher raises a problem and advises students in case of difficulties. Finally, *initiative groups* are formed when the students who mastered to solve certain problems make proposals in a kind of "Let's do this ourselves!". The fact that the students themselves choose a new activity associated with a product of unusual forms of children's initiatives, indicates the presence of the impact of Developmental Education on the development of students in the broad sense as well as on the development of structures uniting these children.

Despite the fact that learning in the school No. 49 is focused mainly on the development of intelligence, the forming habit of education unacceptance of reproductive, non-developing type, determines the tendency of school students of the school to social development. Unfortunately, according to Elena A. Rumbeshta, it does not affect all the students. The children who are prone to self-development do not show social activity and initiative. The impulse that developing education sets nevertheless often leads to self-improvement, makes a person search for effective forms and methods of both individual and social development. In other words, Developmental Education forms a type of personality aimed at the realization of subject-subject activities and participation only in such educational practices in which these relations are possible. The interconnection of the development and collaborative activity is characterized by the collective character of attaching students to the work of this kind. Teachers of the school No. 49 consider that *a child* can acquire the ability to self-development only when he gets to the development-oriented *group* of children. Separate application of competences in the new conditions and forms as well as the organization of these forms become possible after their initial development in a friendly environment of respectful interactive attitudes. In the scope of educational relationship, the children are entitled to seek the new ways of joint activities, then discuss it, analyze it and correct some errors and defects using the collective experience. We can see thus the following bilateral influence: joint activity ensures the availability of developing education, which, in turn, contributes to its effectiveness. In the practice of the school No. 49, therefore, Developmental Education within interactive attitudes motivates adolescents to self-development in the classroom and in after-hour work.

In comparative terms, we should characterize the activity of another innovative institution Tomsk Hobby Center (THC), which has set an ambitious goal to translate the education from the State of Functioning to the State of Development. Tomsk Hobby Center appeared in 1989 as a research team whose idea was to create conditions and opportunities for children and adolescents to realize their own projects on the basis of personal interests – hobbies, and that

was an innovation during the Soviet period (LOBANOV, 2015). At the beginning of the 1990s, the aim of the Hobby Center was the compensation of the negative effects of an environment influence through the increasing of children social activities. By this time, according to Yury P. Kudinov, who is one of the founders of THC, the theoretical basis of the work of Hobby Center reflected the idea of *the four circles* of its influence. The first one is *the center circle*, which unites the core of THC. This circle was formed from different age's groups. The second circle is various *programs of additional education* from the English language to the art studio where children were prepared to move to the first circle. The third circle is the *divisions, which serve the interests of adolescents* and help them in difficult situations. Thus, in the Hobby Center there were a psycho-hygienic service, a class of crisis therapy, an inquiry service and a labor market for children where they could earn real money. Finally, the fourth circle contains the *projects for street children* who might just come to the Hobby Center for some time, and without any entry in the association. The foregoing allows us to consider the experience of THC as an innovative model of creative Social and Developmental Education. The basics of the activities of THC was the development of initiative, cooperation and joint activities for children and adults, the use of projects and Developmental Education. Consequently, the full realization of interactive attitudes can consider the Tomsk Hobby Center as a community of children and adults based on the collective affairs and interests, which mission is supporting socially important and educational initiatives.

The review of the dynamic state of Developmental Education in Russia demonstrates the following results:

(1) In Russia, the theory of Developmental Education has influenced on the role changing of the teacher and the student in the educational process. Nowadays the teacher does not intend to be the autocrat. His role as a translator and information provider is reducing. There happened a replacement of single unitary school, which is an average student-oriented, to diverse school.

(2) The student has gained the status of a subject of the educational process, a student-centered active approach to learning was proclaimed, and the era of

Pedagogy of Cooperation came, which led to other educational content. In the foreground, we have seen student's personality, his development and his activity.

In the modern system of education in Russia, we have distinguished these humanistic tendencies:

- an individualization of the educational process, that is, an appeal to the individuality of each person as opposed to the “average student” orientation;
- the vector shift of the content of education from the knowledge reporting to the mastering of the skills of its independent and autonomous acquisition and use;
- assign the students the status of subjects of education and the educational activities as having these characteristics: active, independent, developing;
- recognizing the need of the development of personal qualities of a student, which are composed from his personal resource;
- expression of learning outcome as a high degree of development of a subject position of the students, which gives them the possibility of determining their own destiny, including professional one.

The authors believe that the development of a subject position of students in the system of Developmental Education is a basic indicator of the quality of educational outcomes.

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