

EDUCATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE ACTIVITIES OF CHILDREN'S ORGANIZATIONS IN BULGARIA (1944-1947)

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Abstract: This publication is a research project funded by Sofia University's State Budget for scientific researches in 2019. The theme of the project is "The education in children's and youth organizations in Bulgaria (1944-1990) in sources." The aim of this paper is to present the educational aspects in the activities of children's and youth organizations in Bulgaria between 1944 and 1947. On September the 9th, 1944 in the political governance in Bulgaria a huge change occurred. The period 1944-1947, during which monarchy was replaced with democratic governance, is called "People's democracy". The same period is also connected with a new beginning in organizing children and youth for educational purposes, out of school system, in non-formal organizations. In the end of 1944 year Unified children's youth organization "Septemvrijche" was created. Unified children's youth organization "Septemvrijche" was a single, national, anti-fascist, cultural and educational organization, that had to be the first assistant to the school. During these first years the main aims were targeted for clearing the structure, functions and tasks, and strengthening the organization. The specific rules and symbols were accepted by the organization, which included oath, cravat "septemvrijka", special flag and badge. The educational purposes, which the organization pursued, in some extent were equal with those of the formal school, but educational forms and methods, were completely different. The main idea was, that work with children in organization should be absolutely different from school classes. The period is characterized with rapid growth of members (children and youth between 7 and 14 years old) and laying the groundwork for a significant educational work. In the structures of the organization the trainers implemented ideological and political, international, patriotic, intellectual, physical and work training. Forms, methods and tools for training used by organization were different from those used by school and endured significant growth in their diversity, according to the educational aim. Considered diversity may be used as source and base for useful practices for contemporary educators. Some of the used forms are: training groups to help trailing students, meetings, conversations, organized visits, amusements, educational and training courses, excursions, work activities, hiking, expeditions, camps, summer playgrounds and many other different forms. These practices may be applied both in the formal educational system and in the non-formal education structures today.

The methods, forms and tools used by "Septemvrijche" are also important for the history of pedagogy, as a science directly linked with historical aspects of education. The topic is significant and because of the fact, that the period 1944-1947, and especially the educational aspects of children's and youth structures, haven't been researched in the required extend so far, from the contemporary point of view.

Keywords: organization, education, methods, forms, tools

INTRODUCTION

The theme for the educational activities implemented by the children's organizations in Bulgaria in the period 1944-1989 is one of those, to which the history of pedagogy remains the debtor. In the conditions of the democratic transition in Bulgaria (after 10.11.1989) the problem is extremely weakly studied. Particular pedagogical aspects can be found in the work of Penka Tsoneva, Rumiana Marinova –Hristidi, Evgenia Kalinova, Iskra Baeva, Ivailo Znepolski and others(Tsoneva, 2019; Tsoneva, 2018; Tsoneva, 2018, 293-332; Tsoneva, 2017, 3-7; Tsoneva, 2018, 130-137, 205-207; Marinova-Hristidi, R.,2010; Kalinova, E. & Baeva, I., 2010 p. 90-95; Znepolski, 2009, p. 206-209). Due to this fact, the realization of a more detailed study, in this not so researched field, will add new facts and highlights to the historical-pedagogic science. The purpose of this report is to expose in the chronological order the obstacles related to occurrence and development of children's and youth organization "Septemvrijtce" in the first three years of its development (1944-1947), that coincided with the time of so called "People's democracy", as well as making a short analysis and summary of the methods, forms and tools, that the organization used in achieving its educational purpose. The used methods for the research are documentary, archival and analytical-synthetic.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ORGANIZATION. FIRST STEPS IN THE EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES.

Notwithstanding the various conceptions, related to the nature of the events leading up to the date 9th September 1944, it is definitely accepted as a turning point for contemporary Bulgarian history. The pluralism that characterizes the new political situation in the country and the existing party system also affects the children's organizations

working within the different parties. The most of existing or newly formed youth unions are already formed children's organizations. At the base of understanding of the new power for youth unity is the reason for crucial part, that one children's and youth organization would play in the education of the young generation. That is why the Political Bureau of the Central Committee (CC) of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) decides to establish an organization for children and adolescent in Bulgaria, from the type of the Lenin Pioneer Organization, existing in the Soviet Union at that time. With the task for building the organization The Worker's Union is entrusted. The name of the organization is a matter of wide discussion, in which children, pedagogical staff and the whole broad community are involved. After the conducted discussions it is suggested and Political Bureau of the CC of BCP decides the name of the organization – "Septemvriytche", connected with the battles against fascism of September 1924 and September 1944. The beginning of the organization is placed with the first detachments. In parallel with children's and youth organization "Septemvriytche" in 1945 its own activity carried out other organizations connected with different parties. To the Youth Socialist Union worked group called "Red swallows" and to Agricultural Youth Union – organization "Stamboliytche". Educational activities implemented other independent children's organizations as "Clover" and "Christiantche". The existence of these organizations, however, carries with the danger of difference between parties being transferred among kids and teenagers. Acknowledging this threat, the CC of BCP mandates the Worker's Union to unite all children in one, patriotic and anti-fascist organization. At the Fifth Conference (April, 1945) the Worker's Union comes out with the proposal, which is being discussed by the CC with the National Committee of Fatherland Front, for the establishment of a single children's organization and making a decision to unite the existing children's organizations in one single mass organization "Septemvriytche"

GROWTH OF THE EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY 1945-1946

The children's and youth organization carries out various school and extracurricular activities with educational character (Tsoneva, 2019). The first year after founding, is determined as "a way of serious searches" (CSA, a. u.1, p.50). Organizational, cultural and educational activities are essential. Out of 800,000 children, between ages 7 and 14, 389,269 are organized, as in different areas of the country, activity is diverse. The first task facing the organization, for the current year, related to the ideological and educational activities, is the promotion of marks in school and tightening of discipline among students. Contribution training groups are set up, led by teachers or stronger in school marks students, to help those who are lagging behind in learning the course material. 8073 meetings are organized for one year and about 22000 talks are delivered, by teachers, leaders or students. Interesting educational forms that are introduced at the very beginning are meeting between "septembriks" and scientists, writers, party activists, etc, and live newspapers. Trough the first six months common form of ideological education are visits – in case of wounded Bulgarian and Russian soldiers, in different factories and businesses to get acquainted with the process of production. The most popular and accepted form are entertainments, where children show their skills and talents. The formation of choirs, orchestras, dance and theater groups is reported. In educational work with children is introduced "krajok" –extracurricular activity for promoting knowledge and student skills in different fields (CSA, a.u.1, p.55). Special attention is turned to reading children's literature and promoting children's creativity and amateur performances. For the period 146 exhibitions of children's wall-newspapers, drawings, objects made by kids and 41 competitions are made. "For proper acquiring of natural phenomena and to discover the beauties and wealth of our country 217 historical sites are explored, 86 cooperatives and community centers were studied, 178 collections and notebooks were written with folk tales, folk songs, proverbs and legends." (CSA, a.u.1, p.56) One of the educational tasks that the organization aims is to strengthen the cohesion and cooperation between children, as in the homeland, as well as with children beyond its borders. Friendship and cooperation are manifested as in support for poor children (with clothes, products, gifts, etc.), so with increased communication with children from USSR and other socialist countries.

The labor activities are closely related to education in the ideology of the organization. In 1945 "it was expressed in the following forms: cleaning schools and yards, planting trees, weeding of field plants, pest control over agricultural crops, livestock farming, cutting and carrying wood, peeling corn, stringing tobacco, making items for poor students, collecting scrap iron, old paper, rubber, herbs, helping with the construction of fountains, bridges, roadsides, etc., helping poor friend, book binding for school and community centers' libraries etc.(CSA, a.u.1, p.56) In the educational system of children's and youth organization "Septemvriytche" the educating through physical activities and sport is envisioned for the beginning. The care of physical fitness and health of children is at stake in the organizational tasks. Physical training initially starts poorly because of the lack of specialists and fixings. For the most interesting and fluent form among children hikes are indicated. During hiking children learn to read Morse code, to read road signs, crawling and observation and acquire other functional skills. Collective games and relays are held. Physical activity among children is rising and expanding in summer camps and playgrounds and towards

the end of the current year increased interest of children is reported. Special gymnastic meetings begin to happen, athletics, swimming and chess teams are organized (CSA, a.u.1, p.57). Summer camps as specific form of physical, health and spiritual empowerment for children are of particular interest to the organization “Septemvrijtche”. Summer camps are seen as a form for reinforcing conscious discipline and upbringing of children. In addition to the physical strengthening in the camps, cultural and educational activities are implemented- talks are delivered; parties, concerts, “fires of freedom”, exhibitions, competitions, visits, hiking, wall-papers and other initiatives and work activities are held.

The mentioned various educational activities carried out within the framework of the first year of the formation of organization give reason to talk about a good start. Until then, in Bulgaria, there was not so massive children’s organization – around 400,000 kids and adolescent are covered by the end of the year. “Septemvrijtche” begins to emerge as one of the important factors for the education of the Bulgarian children and “first assistant to the school” Self-initiative, amateur performances and creativity of the students themselves are stimulated. The first step has been made, but the activity started must be diversified and channeled.

At the beginning of 1946, the Minister of Education approved the Statute of the Unified children’s and youth organization “Septemvrijtche”. According to art.2 “Septemvrijtche is a general, national, anti-fascist, cultural and educational organization for children and adolescent “(CSA, a. u. 1, p.71). Art. 3 decree that “Septemvrijtche” is free, voluntary and patriotic organization of Bulgarian children and adolescent in the governmental and private primary schools.”(ibid) The organization is assigned the role of “the first and the best assistant to the school in every respect”, which promotes “the national, democratic and progressive education of children and adolescent in Bulgaria”(Statute, art.5). Articles 6 to 16 set out the main tasks of the organization, that are directly related to its educational goal- aiding in the development in children of love for knowledge and for building a proper view of natural and material phenomena, implements in children love and devotion to the nation and homeland, the army and labor and works to eradicate the remnants of chauvinism and betrayal of the Motherland. The organization is designed to create and develop in children conscious discipline, amateurism, self-confidence and creativity, and to work for creating a sense of friendship, love, mutual respect and mutual assistance between children and adolescents. “Septemvrijtche” will work to create a healthy morale in children against vices and bad habits, such as smoking, drinking, stealing, lying, laziness and more. The organization aims to build a taste for nice and exquisite and through games, competitions, exercises and sport to work for overall development and hardening of children. The organization will build a sense of friendship and mutual support with children and peoples of all Slavic, freedom-loving and democratic countries. The Statute declares that members of the organization may be all children and adolescents - students, ages 7 to 15, with no difference in gender, nationality and religion. “The septembries” of the first and second grade are called “Chavdarcheta” and a special program for work is created for them. The center of the organization is the school. “Septemvrijtche” agrees his integrity is invariably with the school’s tasks, aiding and completing it. The management is trusted to the Septemvrijtche Supreme Council, which heads the organization throughout the country. In section VII of the Statute “Forms of work in the organization” (art.40) are listed the basic forms of educational activity for children, which are subsequently expanded and enriched.

The adoption of the Statute in early 1946 gave a strong impetus for growth and improving the work in the organization. A general upsurge is reported – strengthening the relations between the Supreme, District and Country Councils of “Septemvrijtche” and the Ministry of Education and its bodies, as well as the active involvement of more teachers (CSA, a. u. 19, p.1-19). Out of about 800,000 children and adolescent, aged 4 to 14, the organization includes 465,078 students. These are 58.5% of the total number of children in the country. The organizational activity is rich. The result from the organizational reinforcement, extension and clarification of educational tasks, gains new dimensions to the growth of the activity of the organization. The activity connected to the educational work is getting stronger. Forms, methods and tools, used in working with children are diverse. The main forms that are used to increase the success of children is facilitating courses in learning and circles (“Krajok”). Cultural and artistic amateur work is marked by reinforcement and quality improvement. Special attention is paid to reading. Organized meetings with popular figures also continue. In direction “Physical education and sport” organization also goes ahead with active upbringing activity (CSA, a. u. 1, p.10-11). Labor education is carried out by labor and social service activities applied by children (CSA, a. u. 21, p. 56-57). In the separated groups “Tchavdarche” extensive educational activities are also developed. With the smallest members of the organization different educational forms and methods are used, according to the age – telling tales, learning songs and poems, reading stories and books.

To strengthen and extend the authority of the children’s organization and to support “even more for the overall outline of the people’s character” (CSA, a.u.21, p.10) and enlargement and stability of the property base, the Supreme Council “Septemvrijtche” decides to attract representatives of the Bulgarian People’s Community Centers Union, Bulgarian Red Cross, National Committee of the Bulgarian Cooperatives and Central Council for Physical

education and Sport. Thus “Septemvrijtche” is engaged and infused with artistic amateur activity, sport, tourism and physical training of children. The purpose of unification is achieved. The organization becomes responsible for the sustainability of the diverse cultural and educational, scientific and physical activity among Bulgarian children (CSA, a. u. 18, p. 194-195).

The stability achieved in the concept and in the main directions of work with the children continues in the second half of the 1946. The period is filled with active and diverse educational activities. In the first three months –the time of summer holiday – organization’s work is limited to work with children in summer camps and summer playgrounds (CSA, a.u.3, p.38-42; CSA, a. u. 11, p.196-198; CSA, a. u. 18, p. 206-207). The educational work is activated with the beginning of school year. The educational methods, forms and tools used in the period are related to the immediate goals of the organization. Special expectations are assigned to the circle (krajok) in order to give a bigger snap to the scientific work in the intellectual education. Cultural and artistic mass work is expanded, as well as activities related to organizing libraries and literary readings. The physical activities and sport render an account of growth, but the forms of educational work with children through them remain unchanged. Similar is the situation with the labor education. In international education, to the active correspondence with children from USSR and other socialist countries are also introduced joint ventures with children from those countries in the summer camps. The aim for the international education for the period is the strengthening the children’s interest to study foreign languages- predominantly Russian and French.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRNGTHENING. INNOVATIVE FORMS OF EDUCATION IN 1947

In 1946 the organization covered 633,464 “septembries” out of 930,942 children, subject of the mandatory training (CSA, a. u. 10, p.6-8). The increase in the children’s marks at school is one of the main tasks for the organization. Groups for facilitating learning are the basic form. They are leaded from teachers and are attended on average from 30 to 60 children. The training goal is not to “reserve” knowledge, but to understand the course material. Team leaders are encouraged to study individually the abilities of children to help them eliminate their weaknesses. The number of circles over the considered period is increased. Progress in this form is also reported by the relation of the introduction of planning. Aiming to improve the quality of work the organization develops other forms of educational activity. Meetings remain as one of the basic forms of education through conversations. Conversations continue to be conveyed mainly by the leaders, with topics being general, historical and less on current public issues. Another popular form in the period is conferences. Conferences are used for reporting and stimulating activity but the form has not yet been developed to the state being sought. Meetings with scientists and public figures, visits to factories and plants continue, with each meeting having to be associated with some educational work. The wall-newspapers, morning parties, entertainments and funs are on the rise. These forms are also perfected. The celebrations begin to be prepared in advance and the repertoire is carefully selected. The impetus of art amateurism is facilitated by the newly introduced forms –district fairs and national reviews of amateur performances. Fairs and reviews of art amateur activities encourage children to participate in various dance groups, orchestras, choirs and more forms for expressing their talents and abilities, as well as for building their love for our traditions and art. In 1947, the educational activity of the organization related to health and the physical fitness of children continues. Depending on the season, children are involved in different sport activities. There are also mass forms, such as, National Spring Marathon, country sports fairs, district reviews, and camps. Despite the lack of planning and development in the activities of the sport sector, the organization makes serious progress with engaging children in sports. The biggest success in terms of sports is the children’s summer camps. In labor education starts the progressive approach of the educational goal, that the organization sets to itself, with the interests and understanding of the official authority. Work activities of the children are under the sign of implementing the two-year governmental business plan and it is rich and diverse. In the forms and tools of upbringing the youngest pupils, enrichment is also observed. Games, tales and songs are completed with walks, hand work, but considering the work with the “chavdarcheta”, the organization experiences some difficulties, mainly related to weaker activities and not enough management support. The 1947 ended with the realization of the pursuit of the governing authority for the association of youth, with the holding of the Constituent Congress at the end of the year (December) of the Union of People’s Youth in Bulgaria. The Resolution adopted by the Congress resolves that ideological and organizational management of children’s and youth organization “Septemvrijtche” to be taken over by the Union of People’s Youth.

CONCLUSION

The period of establishment of the Unified Children’s and youth organization “Septemvrijtche” is related to clarifying the basic ideas in terms of structure, functions and tasks, as well as its reinforcement. The main

pedagogical aspects in the activity of the organization are laid down and developed. In the educational plan through this period, the tasks related to the ideological and political, patriotic, international and labor education are put in the foreground. The great achievement of the of the period is the laying the foundations of the interaction between the school and the organization. Transferring its activity to school (the autumn, 1945) the organization renders an immediate impact on educational work at school. The opposite effect of the school's impact on the organization is the basis of placement of the educational work in the organization of scientific and pedagogical foundations and allows taking into account the age and psychological characteristics of adolescents and enlargement of the scope of methods, forms and tools, use by the organization in the educational work.

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