

EDUCATIONAL SETTING OF SCHOOL: DEVELOPING POSSIBILITIES & PRACTICE OF PERFORMANCE.

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Abstract

This paper addresses one of the challenging issues of modern school – the creation of favorable conditions for a teenager personality development. Teen age has got its specificity that cannot be ignored by teachers. There is a number of conditions in the educational setting of school wherein the stages of development are quite successful. Among these are developing educational setting and new approaches to conducting lessons. However, experience has proven, there are several reasons that cause alienation of the students from educational process. First and foremost, they include congestion of educational content in various subjects, reducing role of a teacher in the solving problem of education and personal development, mismatching of school life atmosphere, school patterns and space the needs and expectations of teenagers. The solutions of the given problem are proposed in this paper.

Key Words: a school, a student, a teenager, personality development, alienation, a lesson, a teacher, competencies, system and activity approach, the content of education.

The significant transformations which have taken place in our country and the world have also fundamentally changed the conditions of school functioning and development. Science and technology development has opened up new information carriers: a student can choose the source of knowledge between a virtual and real teacher, surrounding environment, world network. It is becoming apparent today that

a new educational reality has come into existence, which sometimes can compete with school.

As a result, the modern system of education faces the important goals set by the State in the new Law on Education in Russian Federation [1], Federal state standards of new-generation, [2] in Development strategy of education in Russian Federation till 2025 [3] and many other legislative acts being approved and discussed currently. The Law “On Education in the Russian Federation” guarantees upbringing providing as an integral part of education coherent with training but putting into practice as an independent activity focused on personality development, creating conditions for personal identity and social growth following social and cultural, moral and spiritual values, and adopted social rules and behavioral norms in the interests of an individual, a family, society and state. Thus, one of the central tasks of school is personality formation, their full-featured civil wide self-identity and personal fulfillment. It is important for school to determinate directions and nature of changes in value system, significant changes in cognitive, emotional and personal spheres of a student, i.e. to create favorable conditions for its development.

The process of self-image development is complicated, dynamic, controversial, and is caused not only by self-esteem and self-comprehension of an individual, but is determined by the environment where they are formed and brought up as an initiative, self-sufficient, capable of effective socialization personality. Undoubtedly, the center of developmental school setting is a lesson. A modern student attends about 1 thousand lessons during one academic year. And how many lessons does he attend for 11 years of being at school?

Does today’s lesson develop a student and what is its difference from yesterday’s lesson? We will try to answer this question. If this paper was written several years age, we would have to answer the question “What should the lesson teach students?” Until past decade, knowledge-paradigm of education dominated in school. For many years the standard of education was a school graduate with deep knowledge and skills, formed on its basis. But new Federal State Education Standards

[2] focus not only on knowledge acquisition but also have a setting that any knowledge arises from activity and should regulate it. Knowledge should serve an indicative activity base and not be just abstractive. Modern educational standards are aimed at implementation of the developmental function of a lesson. How shall it be provided practically? First and foremost, according to Pedagogical Science (and it is reflected in the new standards as well) it shall take place through activity and competence-based approaches. Let us take a school lesson of History as an example and see how we can implement the given approaches practically.

Activity approach means priority consideration of activity aspects of the lesson organization in all its stages from planning to homework assignment. Under this approach, the organization of the lesson requires active, variative and self-sufficient cognitive activity of students. Notably, the nature of student's activity is not limited to training, but "is considered in the broad context of understanding the world, personal formation and development of a child." [4] Actually, it is the historical and social disciplines that create a foundation for worldview of the younger generation. The same requirements become essential for new textbooks. Modern textbook should pay special attention to activity organizing components – questions and tasks for students. It is notorious that authors do not always fulfill this requirement to the methodological component of the textbooks, and their texts are not always adapted to cognitive abilities of a student.

The competence-based approach has an impact on tasks definition of the historical training in school and training requirements for students. The lesson in school contains enough opportunities for generating a wide range of competencies. They include "cognitive, social-adaptive (civil) and communicative competences" [4]. It is beyond any doubt that competence data are of general, not only "historical" nature. This is ability to independent activity, willingness to work in a group/team, capacity to self-reflection, etc. There is no denying the developmental component of training requirement for students. The standards cover following groups of requirements: work with chronology, factual knowledge, work with a primary source,

historical description and reconstruction, analysis and explanation, versioning and estimating as well as application of this knowledge in the social environment [4]. And a teacher should teach these things to a student in the classroom during a lesson! Isn't the lesson overloaded, will these innovations cause the student's rejection of it? According to the new standards students obtain the historical knowledge on two levels: basic and advanced. The given two-level (differentiated) approach also creates the conditions for realization of the developmental function of the lesson – there are children at the lesson with equal learning motivation and equal enough cognitive abilities. For this reason a teacher in the classroom feels more free choosing tasks and forms of organization of cognitive activity.

The topics prescribed by standards of education are the same for all levels of education. Another fact is significant as well that student's transition from one level to another is possible and actually goes on smoothly, as the content is the same for all levels.

Thus, the students' choice of their level of education allows them to get oriented in the variety of educational material, in methods of training activity, choice of training level according to their possibilities, i.e. the opportunity to become an active subject of cognitive activity and communication. In this approach one can see the creation of favorable conditions for the purposes of developmental function of training process. But what do we have in practice?

Thus, in the 10th grade in specialized level 3 hours per week are provided for Social Studies. Schedule is set up so that these classes are held in one day: it is easier for school, since one part of one-class students attends the advanced tutorials in the same subject, and another part of the class attends the lessons in other subjects. In one of schools in Saratov, the lesson of Social Studies (10th grade, advanced level) was attended by 8 students. According to a Social Studies textbook [5], a student-apprentice gave the lectures on the history of ancient, medieval and modern age philosophy for 2 hours, and during the third hour he turned to the issues of Old Russian philosophical thought. This material is quite complex in its content and

cannot be based on the knowledge, gained by students in previous lessons. It was impossible to organize self-sufficient compulsive work with the children. By the third hour only 6 students stayed, and the rest just gave way. It is obvious alienation and even abruptness of the training process. But it is not a teenager who is to be blamed, it is a fault of textbook writers and school. Textbook writers left out of consideration the cognitive capabilities of the upper-formers and school teachers felt convenient to set three hours of advanced level in one day.

There is one more innovation, fixed in the standards, such as organization of upper-formers' project activities. Although, it was not yet successfully used in Soviet schools in 1920s. A student has to take part in the class project performance, at that the project can be both individual and collective. The project is not just an essay or a report, it is a set of different students' activities: historical source analysis, map work, presentation and report preparing, etc. There is no doubt that, project work (both individually and in group) provides a high level of students self-activity performance, and, generally, not during the class. But a teacher should act as an adviser or an assistant, and parts of the project can be presented and discussed during the lesson. Such type of work organization implements competence-based and activity approaches to the full extent, and thus, improves developing learning function during the lesson.

The requirements to the lesson have also changed. Today, students are invited to formulate the topic of a lesson on their own account, to define the knowledge which should be gained, to perform learning activities by themselves, to specify difficulties and to measure outcomes of their and their peers activities. A teacher should offer a student to choose a homework assignment by himself, taking into account their individual capabilities. All this testifies that in modern practice students' self-sufficiency is priority-oriented. And it is clear that a high level of self-sufficiency during the lesson enhances its developmental function greatly.

Consequently, we can conclude that in modern Pedagogy and Methodology many theoretical approaches to make a lesson really developing have been developed. Now we turn to practice.

It is obvious that educational activities development, which have to take place during the implementation of activity and competence-based approaches, takes time. Where it can be taken from? For the content knowledge, which according to new programs should be gained by students, has not decreased. We will refer to the approximate thematic planning. [6]. Thus, for 4 lessons in the first term of the 7th grade students have to cover one of the most complex periods of Russian history – the Time of Trouble. At the same time they have to “expose the contradictions of the Russian society, characterize Boris Godunov’s personality and activities, explain the meaning of the concepts *the time of troubles/troubles, pretender, intervention*, show directions of False Dmitry’s military campaigns and Ivan Bolotnikov’s troops, Polish and Swedish invaders on the historical map, to justify the evaluation of operations of Liberation campaigns participants of trainbands”. And these are not the only educational activities which according to the program students should perform. However, any teacher will say that it is impossible, either to focus on knowledge, or to form skills, sacrificing knowledge. It is simpler and shorter in time to teach than to organize creative self-sufficient activities. But this is the only way the activity approach could be implemented. And what do you think a teacher will choose in practice? It is considerably harder to develop than to teach.

From our point of view, program writers tried to combine the old content, i.e. knowledge-paradigm of education and new requirements – activity and competence-based approaches.

What do children think about this? Within undertaken study the students of the 10th grade (to get more correct results 100 students from average schools and gymnasiums were involved into the study) were asked a question *if the lesson of History motivates the interest to learning*. It is clear that the interest is the significant motive for learning, and its availability contributes to more successful

implementation of the developing function of a lesson. The results were as follows: 41% of students answered “yes”, 59% answered “no”. By all means, this is the subjective opinion of the upper-formers, but these figures show that more than a half of students do not see the developing lesson, but most commonly they do not want to see it because they are not interested in the lessons. At times the obvious material overload lowers students’ interest and causes its abruption.

What prevents a teacher from making a lesson pedagogical area more developing? Activity approach and educational operations formation are fine but don’t we see its contradiction with the final result – Unified State Examination and State Final Examination? That is why today’s teacher sometimes (and it is an open secret) has to drill school leavers to memorize historical concepts, dates, names or events rather than implementing new teaching technologies and raising the level of self-sufficiency, using students’ creative work during the lesson. But Final Testing introducers consider that only A and B parts are focused on knowledge reproduction, and C part is focused on students’ creative self-sufficient thinking demonstration, their skills to analyze, compare and draw conclusions. And what are results of this drilling? How did the school leavers of 2014 in Saratov region get through C part? 73% of students could not do the task C3, 60% failed the task C4, and task C5 was failed by 61,6% of students passing the Unified State Examination on History.[7] Those who were not equal to the task could not understand the source text, to classify the facts, to use the rules of the cause-and-effect and structural analysis. Such results testify that the price for the lost interest to one of the most exciting sciences is too high.

What were the answers of the school leavers to the question: “Does the Unified State Examination form the interest to studying?” 17% of schoolchildren answered “yes”, 83% answered “no”. These results confirmed our expressed contradiction. And some students put several exclamation marks in their answers, though it was not required in the questionnaire.

Next paradox is that modern informational technologies using Internet-resources are designed to solve developing problems, but actually they prevent their solution in many ways. Students are brilliant at using computers. And this helps them to write essays, compositions, reports, prepare presentations for lessons without the slightest efforts. There is enough information for doing this on the World Wide Web. But, alas, it does not teach students to think themselves. The thought develops when children think themselves but do not compile (at the best case) from ready-made texts placed on the Internet, present their own texts at the lesson, and, what is even more efficient, argue and prove. But, it seems to us, that not all students of senior classes can do it, and teachers have no time at the lesson to teach them this.

Finally, the traditional knowledge-paradigm, which has dominated in the school education for many years, is convenient and habitual for teachers; it is difficult to give up on it. Today's lesson primarily focused on personality development should be accepted by teachers themselves. We have got training and education techniques, but there is no development technique. Personality development is time-consuming pedagogical work and it should be fulfilled in the process of education.

Socialization took place of education in theoretical field and in practice of public educational institutions. Now all educators from kindergartens to universities are concerned with the youth and children socialization. Books and papers are being published, where the problems "of education and training in the process of socialization" are seriously reasoned. What pedagogical risks are hidden behind such manipulations with pedagogic concepts? Many teachers (unfortunately, theorists as well) have got a misperception of educational process structure. "Education" means holistic pedagogical process which can be understood via its components characteristics: upbringing, training, socialization. They are directly related to processes of development and individualization.

Therefore, if "education" is replaced by "training", upbringing is inevitably restricted in the same way. This is what we can see now: competences in the system of education have absorbed not only habitual knowledge and skills, but also "ended

up with” capacities, motives, cognitive and affective tenets of students. Key competences acquisition enables “to master life skills”, to become creative, adaptive and autonomous in a fast-paced world. Social skills, communicative competences competitive abilities succeed personality education.

Exaggeration of socialization significance at the expense of upbringing is also dangerous for education. Processes of upbringing and socialization are closely related, but they are not identical. Socialization is a process of direct insertion of a person into the social setting, lifestyle. The socialization effect is social experience of an individual. The teacher’s role in the students’ socialization process is great: they create, improve the settings, guide and restrict social contacts and communication. But the role is impersonal: a teacher acts as a moderator, a facilitator.

In a completely different way things take place in upbringing which is based on emotional and value-conscious sphere of personality. A different pedagogical mechanism operates here: personal interaction of a teacher and students, open expression of their relations, attitudes, values and life principles. For this reason Konstantin D. Ushinsky emphasized that “beliefs can be effected only by beliefs”. A teacher educates by the example of their personality. Another significant reason for teenagers alienation from school is rejection of school atmosphere, its order of functioning. It is obvious that the order concept and its implementation depend on values and professional activities of educators. The settled order of school life consists of both evident (specified, formed) and not evident (beyond the subjects, non-formalized) characteristics and provides students with involvement into complex world of values, traditions, social and cultural practices. It is the place where a child is not preparing for life but lives, solving significant educational and vital (social) problems. To what extent students feel comfortable in this order mostly organized by adults their success in learning activity and psychological stability depend on.

Thus, the analysis of developing possibilities of school setting as well as main reasons for teenagers alienation from school convince of that in coming years further significant changes in education are inevitable, the most important of which is top-

priority focus of educational process on a person: defining of possibilities of school education providing additional insights of new content of education, modern world and common to humanity problems by a growing individual.

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