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**PEDAGOGICAL CONDITIONS OF ADAPTATION AND
EDUCATION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN IN PRESCHOOLS**

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Abstract

Due to globalization and global migration, children face a pressing problem of adjustment to a multicultural society and adaptation to new socio-cultural environment on all stages of education. This article discusses integration, adaptation and education in a multicultural society, emphasizing the processes in a preschool educational establishment that migrant children go through.

Using the generalized domestic and foreign experience, the terms “adaptation” and “education” will be analyzed in the context of theory and practice of work with pre-school migrant children and their correlation will be demonstrated. The interconnectedness of adaptation and education processes in socialization, individualization, personal and creative development of migrant children will be emphasized.

The authors have defined and described in detail the important educational conditions ensuring adaptation and education of pre-school migrant children: emphasis on the principles of the humanistic pedagogy; creation of an educational environment in a kindergarten group; manifestation of the unity of children and adults in interactions with children; organizing the children’s activities; advanced training of teachers; involvement of parents as participants in the socialization and education processes. This article describes the real-life experience of implementation of educational conditions for adaptation and education of pre-school migrant children.

The authors have defined the essence of adaptation of migrant children in an educational establishment and stated the necessity for coordination between children, teachers and parents as members of the educational process; they have also brought into focus the necessity for early pedagogical support of adaptation and education of pre-school migrant children.

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Keywords: Migrant children, pre-school child, adaptation, education, educational conditions, humanistic pedagogy.



1. Introduction

Increased migration is a reality of the modern world. Cultural and psychological barriers between countries and peoples are fading away, but at the same time extremism, migrant phobia and ethnophobia are increasing. The problems come up again of the ethnic identity, multiculturalism, tolerance, adaptation and integration, and these problems become a subject of the pedagogical science which is highly sensitive to a social change.

The pre-school period, according to modern psychologists and educational theorists (B.G. Ananyev, A.G. Asmolov, E.V. Bondarevskaya, O.S. Gazman, P.Y. Galperin, D.I. Feldshtein and others) is a phenomenon of a child's cultural development, primary socialization, individualization of his or her personality and evolution of his or her creativity. A child's values are being formed through the language and the interactions with adults and other children in the group (M.I. Lisina, V.I. Loginova, O.S. Ushakova, S. Tseitlin and others).

Adaptation and education of a pre-school migrant child mean that the child acquires the social skills and behavioral experiences appropriate for the new cultural environment, that he or she knows how to solve everyday problems in new circumstances and knows the ways of self-actualization. It is important to remember that this process is two-fold: on the one hand, the child instinctively adapts to the new environment, and on the other hand, he or she receives the organized assistance and support from the educational establishment which is the social and governmental institution for facilitating the child's adaptation and personal development (Ushakova, 2015).

2. Problem Statement

A pre-school migrant child gets disoriented in unfamiliar living conditions and struggles to digest the social experience in the multi-language and multi-cultural environment. Deprivation of familiar living conditions brings about psychological disorientation in the social environment and the identity crisis (M.S. Dobryakova, E.Y. Protasova, G.U. Soldatova, F.A. Sokhin, E.I. Tikheeva, L.A. Shaigerova and others). Low social standing of a migrant family often results in a low status of the child among peers and in absence of friends. According to M.A. Boldyreva, if a migrant family experiences the change of the social standing, the cultural differences are being dramatized by the social distance (Boldyreva, 2001). The stress affects not only the child's personal development, but his or her health as well: the child develops sleep disorders, loss of appetite and nervousness.

There is a positive correlation between adaptation and the aggression level in the host country: the more tolerant and accepting the society is, the less time and effort it takes to adapt to it (Asmolov, 2012).

The specific aspects of the adaptation process of migrants in host countries (M.S. Dobryakova, B.G. Zhogin, T.F. Maslova, O.E. Khukhlaev, V.K. Shapovalova) and recent advances in migration pedagogy as a global educational issue (E.V. Bondarevskaya, M.L. Gevorkyan and others) have been reflected in the modern science. Nevertheless, the problems of socio-cultural adaptation and education of pre-school migrant children are understudied.

3. Research Questions

When considering the problems of adaptation and education of migrant children, it is important to remember that two simultaneous processes have to be organized and sustained: the first process is the cultural identification in the host society where the child develops a sense of cultural identity, acquires the cultural traits and successfully adapts to the new environment; the second process is the child's moral development through internalizing the common ethical standards, forming the system of moral principles and behavior-regulatory functions and supporting his or her individualization, personal growth and moving into adulthood.

A child's progress during the adaptation period depends on his or her psychophysiological and personal traits, family relationships, the kindergarten environment (S.Y. Mescheryakova, A.V. Kosheleva, G.G. Filipova and others). There is a correlation between the child's age and the duration of the adaptation period: the older the child is, the longer it takes for him or her to adapt to the kindergarten.

A child adapts through interactions with the outside world, adjustment to the new cultural and social environment, internalizing the system of relations in new communities, matching his or her behavior with their norms and rules; thus, adaptation is both the process and the result of the coordination between the child's own capabilities and the external world.

Education of migrant children is often being addressed from the perspective of the humanistic pedagogy, through forming ethnically plural (mixed) groups. It is important for a child to develop the community spirit and the sense of being needed and valuable for the community.

E.V. Bondarevskaya holds the idea of person-centered education as a part of the migration pedagogy and describes it as the "pedagogically controlled process of cultural identification, social adaptation and creative fulfillment, where a child becomes integrated in the culture and social life and all his creative abilities and potentials are being actualized" (Bondarevskaya, 2006).

Pre-school migrant children require a special caring attitude; education is only possible using the principles of the humanistic pedagogy: it is a goal-directed organized process of controlling the child's development by providing the supporting environment for full actualization of his or her talents and abilities and through secure interactions with the teacher and peers. It is important to recognize the aspects of the child's native culture, the traditions of the ethnic group he or she belongs to, as well as the child's uniqueness and his or her individual ways of self-actualization and communication (Krylova, 2000).

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to define and describe the educational conditions encouraging adaptation and education of pre-school migrant children.

Adaptation and education are interrelated; they are a holistic representation of a child's integration into a new social setting. Adaptation is voluntary and involuntary adjustment to a new environment, understanding its norms, rules and values and acquiring the skills enabling a child to be successful in the society and to communicate with others. Education (Selivanova, Stepanov & Shakurova, 2016) is controlling the process of personal development through creating the supportive environment. Thus, education aims at creating the conditions for successful adaptation to a new social setting, supporting at the same time the child's unique abilities and ambitions, the process of individualization. It is important to

consider the adaptation and education of pre-school migrant children in a challenging socio-cultural situation as interconnected processes.

5. Research Methods

In order to outline the field and the methods of work, it is important to highlight the important educational conditions facilitating the adaptation and education of migrant children.

The conditions supporting adaptation and education of migrant children in a pre-school educational establishment are as follows:

- Using the humanistic pedagogy as a key principle;
- Creation of the educational environment where the ethnically plural (mixed) kindergarten group acts as a resource unit;
- Manifestation of the unity of adults and children of different ethnic origin;
- Organizing the children's activities;
- Advanced training of teachers;
- Involvement of parents as participants in the socialization and education processes.

We will now take a closer look at each of the above conditions.

6. Findings

Nowadays the real-world children's experiences have become a pivot point for any educational work. The priority is given to the humanistic approach which addresses the "children's personal real-life problems".

The most important idea of the humanistic approach is that the childhood is not a mere preparatory phase in anticipation of the adulthood, but the life in its own right. Admitting the inherent value of the childhood has become a key message of humanistic educational theories such as Korczak's orphanages, A. Neills's Summerhill School, C. Freinet's New French School, G. Wyneken's Wickersdorf Free School Community. Recognizing the inherent value of the childhood, we infer the importance of a present moment in a child's life. The central conceptual ideas are inherited from J. Korczak: constant efforts to understand the child in all aspects of his or her personality; respecting his or her rights; tolerance and acceptance towards the child; using the conversational approach in all activities and communication; using the gradual approach in influencing the child; treating children selflessly, only aiming for their happiness and well-being; respecting the childhood as a fully valid period of life; treating the child's concerns and feelings seriously.

When considering education and adaptation of migrant children, it is important to rely on ideas of "humanization of the childhood space" (Demakova, 2013), which means that children's life is organized and structured; children have a lot of physical and mental exercise; they have opportunities to make both impulsive and conscious choices; they experience strong emotions; they enjoy the space of total freedom. Basically, it refers to the humanization of the educational work (Demakova & Shustova, 2017).

A group as an educational environment. An ethnically plural group acts as a resource unit which is effective for communication between migrant children and their Russian peers; it gives children the positive

experience of communication in a friendly environment and the sense of belonging to an important group of peers in new conditions.

Ethnically plural kindergarten group in its essence is potentially most egalitarian, inclusive, easily accessible and humanistic adapted environment. J. Korczak introduced the term “rearing” of a child which means that an adult helps a child in a “difficult task of growing up” without trying to speed up this process, but patiently waiting for the child’s victories. Addressing these goals, J. Korczak attached much significance to what he called “the children’s community” (he was the first educational scholar to describe this phenomenon) (Korczak, 2014). He elaborated the empirical typology of a “nurturing environment”. Each of the described environments forms a particular personality. E.g. the personality conditioned by a “dogmatic environment” is predominantly passive: the calmness transforms into detachment and apathy. On the contrary, an “idea-driven environment” forms a proactive personality with high self-esteem and freedom of action and judgment, capable of exploring and transforming the world.

A group as an educational space makes it possible to involve all children in a common activity; a child feels his or her contribution to the group’s achievements; it creates unity and mutual support.

The group space is being created with regard to a non-native speaking child’s need for language acquisition (given that at home the child uses his or her native language) and with regard to the learning style of migrant children; visual materials are being used both in learning and leisure activities.

The next educational condition is the manifestation of the unity of teachers and children of different ethnic origins.

In a society consisting of different nationalities, religions and subcultures, it is important to create the conditions where a child can absorb the values of another person or a different culture. At organizing of the pedagogical process, it is significant to maintain that collaboration is used as an education method, which ensures the learners distribution into self-dependently working small groups involving the children with different abilities and knowledge into them (Asmolov, 2012).

An important condition for arranging this process is a unity of children and adults which occurs during interaction with other children and adults who matter to the child. This unity makes children realize their own and other people’s values and gives rise to a common value-oriented space (Shustova, 2003). The unity of children and adults often occurs during open conversation or interesting common activity where every person has an opportunity to express themselves and their opinions, hear and understand another person’s opinion (Selivanova & Sokolova, 2012). Common value-oriented space is an essential feature of the unity of children and adults and displays its coexistence-related qualities.

A coexistence-related unity may be described as “being together” where lives (or existence) of several people touch and remain in close contact (Buber, 2013). A unity implies mutual acceptance of all members involved, which inspires the spiritual bond and better understanding between the individuals. The unity is being created by the synergy of its participants, embracing norms, values and goals of communication and interaction and embodying “I”, “You” and “We”.

Children and adults as part of this unity don’t adhere to prescribed roles and positions. A teacher deliberately avoids the dominant position of a person who knows what is right and what is wrong. A teacher is guided not by any prescribed plans or norms, but rather by real-life situations (Shustova, 2015).

From the very beginning, the teacher's efforts have been focused on building rapport with children. With this purpose the first "Svechka" ("Candle") was organized. This form of communication has become the basis for manifestation of the unity of children and adults and has become a meaningful experience of value-oriented open communication with peers and adults.

"Svechka" is a circle where children and adults may speak out, discuss the activities and current events taking place in the group, express their gratitude and share their feelings.

At the first Svechka children were establishing the intimate bond, e.g. self-actualization and self-expression in the process of community-focused communication, as well as building friendships. Svechka was summoned daily after the afternoon snack. Children sat in a circle and shared their day's experiences, expressed their opinions, discussed situations or incidents in the group; the "Spasibo" ("Thank you") exercise was introduced where every participant could express their gratitude to any other participant by raising their hand and taking the toy-symbol. At this stage the teacher's goal is to create the soothing atmosphere where every child feels accepted and emotional bond between the participants is formed.

Once a week a "Friendship Circle" was held; it is an exercise for children in a mixed group where they could build trust and broaden their socio-cultural understanding. Children were engaged in small conversations depending on their age: "I live among different people", "I am the only one of a kind", "Identical vs. similar", "Why we are friends" etc.), team-building games, quizzes on different countries and cultures. It is important for teachers to respect children's opinions, to appreciate their ideas, habits, affections as well as difficulties and problems and to help children solve them.

The next important educational condition is the organization of event-based children's activities.

Adaptation and education of migrant children is possible if a child is involved in a unity with other children through different types of practical activity. Adaptation and education of an individual should be activity-based or, more precisely, motivation-based. Analyzing the process of a "conscious individual's" development, A.N. Leontyev mentions that at a certain point the consciousness is no longer guided by mere actions of an individual, but starts reflecting a hierarchy of their relations; the submission and resubmission of their motivations takes place. Interdependence of a motivation of the action (as an external driving force) and the needed (as inner condition of an individual) determine adaptation as a result of activity-based development. The latter implies "highly conscious creative activity of an individual open for continuous meaningful exchange with the social environment and with the society as a whole and taking to the next level both the environment and the individual." (Leontyev, 1975).

According to the humanistic pedagogy, the important condition for a child's self-fulfilment is feeling of his or her worthiness. This feeling is brought along by friendly atmosphere during communication, where relationships between children and teachers are based on respect and trust, mistakes lead to understanding and acquiring of new experience, and a teacher creates success scenarios for children.

According to the statistics, migrant children rarely (if ever) experience success (Revunova, 2011). Development of values, learning to accept his- or herself through different activities (artistic and creative activities, labour, sports, games and learning) helps a child anchor the feeling of success, understand his or her important traits and abilities and build self-confidence.

From the first days, the teacher introduced partial self-administration. During duties children were engaged in labour and socially important activities, learned mutual help and cooperation, set goals and

controlled the teamwork, analyzed the group relations thus increasing understanding of their own motivations in behaviour and activities.

“Our Group’s Mailbox” was created. J. Korczak explains its purpose as follows: “A mailbox teaches children to wait patiently for the reply which does not come at first demand; to distinguish between minor sorrows, worries, desires and doubts and serious ones... It teaches them thinking, reasoning; it teaches them wanting and obtaining” (Korczak, 2014). What is peculiar about the mailbox in a pre-school group is that children cannot write, but everyone is eager about sending and receiving letters. So children together with the teacher invented pictorial writing and exchanged pictures using the mailbox. Excitement about sending and receiving letters encouraged children to learn to read and write, which was noticed by parents.

A thought-provoking experiment was borrowed from J. Korczak’s practice: the children’s parliament and fight lists. During parliament meetings children could express their suggestions and requests, discuss “bad behavior” of group members, find solutions to problems and disputes, etc. Children actively participated in discussions, looked for possible solutions and scenarios with excitement, took other children’s requests with care and consideration, learned to respect other’s opinions and forgive. The Fight Lists disciplined children because nobody wanted to be “on the list”. Children learned to keep their temper and solve conflicts through discussion.

The important activity was introduced to familiarize children with the culture and traditions of other countries (countries of origin of the migrant children). During Days of National Cultures, e.g. Day of Uzbekistan, Day of Tatarstan, Day of Russia, Day of Ukraine, Day of Turkey, etc. children learned the ethnic traditions and holidays of a respective country, made DIY symbols representing this country, learned some words of its language, played national games; parents often cooked traditional meals. Such activities helped broaden the children’s perspectives, taught them tolerance and curiosity towards people of other nationalities, made them realize the cultural diversity of the nations both within their country and across the globe. Our colleagues abroad have the similar experience. Conflicts should not turn into hatred, rather their creative solution could improve cohesion in the community. (...) If the children can learn why their fellow „strange” is, if we help them to find the value in being different, mockery and ostracism can be avoided (Bencene & Fekete, 2011).

Another important organizational and educational condition for adaptation and education of pre-school migrant children is the specialized work with pre-school teachers: advanced training of teachers.

The “Non-Native Child in a Pre-School Educational Organization” programme was introduced as part of the advanced training of teachers of mixed pre-school groups as well as the course of research and practice seminars organized by the Regional Non-Governmental Organization “Korczak’s Youth Center”.

Teacher training course included the basic (regulatory) part where the regulatory framework of multicultural education in the Russian Federation was explained as well as the Strategy of Educational Development and the Concept of Moral Development and Education of Russian Citizens. The subject-oriented (methodic) part of the course defined the concepts of migration, multiculturalism in the modern society, tolerance and ethnic conflicts. Special attention was given to the summarized psychological and educational profile of a pre-school migrant child and to the problem of bilingualism. The conceptual ideas of J. Korczak were explored as part of the theoretic and methodological training of pre-school teachers.

The long experience (since 1993) of the international integration children's Korczak camp "Nash Dom" was recommended for study: the camp has been working towards integration, cultural exchange, practical application of the principles of J. Korczak's humanistic pedagogy and children's self-administration. The following practice-oriented seminars have been presented: adaptation of children to new conditions (new living conditions or a new group), peculiarities of work with special categories of children (non-native children, children with disabilities, single-parented children etc.), application of the principles of the humanistic pedagogy in the everyday reality of a pre-school group, humanization of the childhood space.

Weekly councils were held where teachers of mixed groups discussed educational issues and problems and shared their positive experiences from implementation of various methods. Every teacher could speak out, hear other's opinions and reach understanding of shared problems. The teachers were collectively looking for solutions thus enriching their professional experience, getting the psychological support and preventing the occupational burnout.

Another condition for education and adaptation of pre-school migrant children is involvement of parents as participants of the adaptation and education processes.

Meetings, discussion groups, teacher-parent meetings and parent's club meetings were held. Here are some of the topics discussed: "Me and my child in a new socio-cultural context", "Humanistic pedagogy and the today's world", "Pre-school educational organization's potential for education of pre-school children", etc. During these meetings, the parents were recognizing possible psychological consequences of the immigration, possible solutions and ways of preventing social maladaptation. The following issues were addressed: awareness about the educational environment in mixed pre-school groups and designing suitable conditions, looking for forms of interaction with children, identifying children's personal traits, their interests, hobbies and key problems.

Throughout the entire academic year the parents had individual meetings with focused specialists such as psychologists, speech therapists, social workers, nurses whom they could consult and ask questions.

7. Conclusion

As a conclusion, we will summarize the key points of what we have already stated.

Adaptation of migrant children in a pre-school educational organization means coordination between the child's own potential and the outside world, adjustment to changing cultural environment and new social and living conditions, to new structures of relations in particular socio-cultural and psychological communities.

It is important to realize the interconnectedness of adaptation and education in socialization, individualization, personal and creative development of children.

The important educational conditions ensuring adaptation and education of pre-school migrant children are as follows: using of the humanistic pedagogy as a key principle; creation of the educational environment where the ethnically plural kindergarten group acts as a resource unit; manifestation of the unity of adults (teachers) and children; organizing activities reflecting the children's personal, cultural and conceptual interests and needs; advanced training of teachers; involvement of parents as participants in the socialization and education processes.

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