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**POLYTECHNIZATION AND EDUCATIONAL PROCESS IN UKRAINIAN
CHILDREN'S VILLAGES (1920S – 1930S)**

Industrialization in Ukraine in the second half of the 1920s highlighted the need for the vocational training of pupils, their ability to rationalize their work, understand production processes and the role of technology, etc. It was believed that those young people, who are equipped with technical knowledge and skills and are capable of dealing with the main manufacturing tools, can be of benefit to the country as a labor force reserve for new factories, plants, and small producers' artels. Thus, the use of technical labor in social education schools was becoming increasingly important and was determined by the general tasks of social education, as well as current demands, one of which was the polytechnization of education.

In the 1920s, polytechnism as a principle of the organization of the educational process was seen as the next stage in the establishment of the comprehensiveness of education driven by the specific features of the period.

In the course of the implementation of the Decree issued by the Central Committee [of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union] on introducing children to the main industries and ensuring a close connection between the study and labor, the idea of obligatory cooperation of schools and orphanages with factories was discussed. The Decree also included a number of separate pacts concerning the Children's Villages. Thus, it was decided to bring plants, factories, machine and tractor stations, sovkhozes (state farms), and kolkhozes (collective farms) to Children's Villages, as well as other institutions for children, by providing equipment for workshops and instructors to manage the activities [1, p. 16].

The idea of polytechnization in education was reflected in some normative acts on the reorganization of seven-year schools. For instance, the Decree of the Board of People's Commissariat for Education (December 12, 1929) "On reorganization of

seven-year schools” stated: “The primary task of seven-year schools reorganization, which is seen as bringing them closer to the connections with and the participation in the industrial life of the society, is also the task of polytechnization of schools. It is necessary to direct the educational process to the study of production processes and to promote children’s participation in them, thus equipping the front line of the society with polytechnic knowledge. The history of seven-year schools went through a long way of differentiation: from a regular vocational school to its rural and urban varieties, further – to the industrial and agronomic specialization, and, as a logical final stage on this path, the types of schools that are the closest to socialist industry and polytechnism: factory apprenticeship seven-year schools and schools for village youth (the latter developed as a new type of schools for the young people (16 – 18 years of age) in the countryside)” [9, p. 59].

The reorganization of seven-year schools was to be carried out in accord with the two types of schools that were the most suitable for the realization of the idea of polytechnic education: factory apprenticeship schools and schools for village youth. “The process of reorganization puts forward the task of enhancing job-related differentiation of schools in regard with the best models which are operating now: factory apprenticeship schools as schools of industrial orientation and schools for village youth (or, to be more precise, schools of agricultural collectivization) as those directed towards agriculture. This does not mean the segregation of the vocational school. On the contrary, these two school types should constitute an integrated vocational school,” the Decree stated [9, p. 59].

The process of polytechnization of the educational process in the Children’s Villages confronted a number of difficulties and obstacles. The latter were primarily caused by the lack of understanding of its nature by teachers and educators, who often saw it as related to craftwork or, rather, to teaching numerous crafts and set respective requirements to equipment. To address those shortcomings, real help was needed (in terms of curriculum, equipment), which could be rendered through educational journals, courses, seminars, and groups. It was necessary to explain the main features of polytechnization in schools, especially of which teachers had insufficient or incorrect understanding.

The famous Ukrainian educator A. Mandryka agreed that polytechnism is “the principle or a system of education. As such, it is a complex phenomenon, and any attempt of detailing it remains relative and incomplete and should be only made to help the actual introduction of general principles into school life” [4, p. 10].

He believed that the following detailing of the tasks of polytechnization in education is appropriate:

- “1) forming the habits of social labor and team work;
- 2) promoting awareness of the scientific grounds of the production processes;
- 3) developing the ability to quickly adapt to new working conditions;
- 4) enhancing psychological and physical capabilities, namely technical initiative and creativity;
- 5) mastering basic labor skills; and
- 6) encouraging self-discipline at work and stimulating enthusiasm for the process of technical reconstruction of the economy” [4, p. 10].

Studying the Children’s Villages experience in vocational education, one can observe various operations taught and a number of skills developed: work with paper and cardboard, woodwork, etc. It should also be mentioned that the process of polytechnization was viewed by many teachers as a process of teaching numerous crafts, as opposed to one craft. Thus, many teachers had to ask themselves about the possible ways to deal with this drawback and to achieve diversity in the vocational activities of the students. “The thing is that every vocational skill is included in the system of polytechnism not in accord with its content, but depending on the way it is taught: it can reach the highest level of expertise in a particular trade or, on the other hand, be a part of polytechnism”, A. Mandryka mentioned [4, p. 10].

Seeing labor as a key factor in social education, one can determine its main characteristics: “labor develops team spirit, particularly if classes are organized taking into consideration the principle the division of labor (differentiation of labor), strengthens will, cultivates the sense of harmony, accuracy, precision of movement, endurance, good eye, etc.” [5, p. 48]. By providing children with basic labor skills and acquainting them with the main industries and materials, the school carried out

polytechnic vocational training, which was important to any individual irrespective of his/her future occupation.

From now on, the school was urged to actively participate in the process of polytechnization. With the expansion of labor school opportunities, the process of industrialization and the bolstering of the elements of vocational training began.

Polytechnism in schools was not a separate discipline. It was seen to be incorporated into the content of different academic disciplines and reflected in the choice of learning material for physics, chemistry, natural and social sciences. It is understandable that the curriculum built on the basis of polytechnism demanded from students the ability to observe, deepen, put these observations to test, and to record their observations and make conclusions.

Firstly, teaching labor in a polytechnic school had to provide students with general vocational skills, such as setting goals, planning work, considering various factors, and appropriately distributing tasks between each other, team work, etc. Secondly, it was to teach them to understand labor processes in terms on technical labor organization, its value for the society.

The question that had to be answered next was how and what must be done in schools to ensure vocational polytechnization. To begin with, educators believed that the introduction of students to work could be of two kinds: practical and theoretical.

For instance, the practical approach involved first-hand participation in various working processes:

- 1) independent living skills;
- 2) participation in various manufacturing processes;
 - agricultural work;
 - manufacturing processes related to craftwork; and
 - different forms of community work [12, p. 89].

For example, in *Lenins'ke Children's Village*¹, the development of independent living skills cause a large number of conflicts between children and teachers. Children were frequently dissatisfied with the backbreaking work they had to do, as

¹ *Lenins'ke Children's Village* began its work in 1923 in Kyiv (Lukyaniv'ka district) as a social educational establishment of a boarding-school type.

well as with the failure to equally distribute the tasks among them. Therefore, a different system based on different principles was needed. As a result, the artel system was introduced, which had numerous advantages compared to duty shifts, helped direct children towards work, automatize skills, was closer to the scientific approach to work organization, promoted team spirit, and taught them to bear collective responsibility.

In *Lenins'ke Children's Village*, there were 12 artels, which gave children an opportunity to fully advance their potential. Each artel was divided into two groups, so that they could work week shifts. The artels were subordinate to the sanitary committee, a regulatory and controlling body, which was also in charge of cultural and educational activities and covered certain labor processes: “artels encourage grouping children in accord with their psychological features; promote initiative and responsibility; allow children to have a break from work and, finally, develop in children, who are very careful observers, the understanding of what can be changed to improve their work” [13, p. 8].

In *Odessa Third International Children's Village*², the work children had to do was mainly aimed at independent and self-sustained living: they worked in vegetable and fruit gardens; could observe, get new experience, and try to interpret it, etc. With the goal of increasing the number of labor processes and developing the connection between education and the economic life of the village, a plan regulating the activity of the school was worked out. The plan described several areas: economic section (duties at school, including the positions of a supply room keeper, a kitchen manager, and a bookkeeper); sanitary section (monitoring the fulfillment of the basic sanitary living and eating conditions); culture section (in charge of children's organizations, as well as administering the educational courses and dealing with the elimination of illiteracy); professional and technical section (field trips, museums, gardens, maintenance, and provision commissions).

An interesting approach to implementing independent living was suggested by the Polish House (subdivision) of *Odessa Third Comintern Children's Village*, where

² *Odessa Third International Children's Village* was established as a model state institution in 1920. This village included 28 children's institutions representing various nationalities.

children were divided into three age groups – plutons – junior, middle, and senior.

In the senior pluton, self-service was based on the members' voluntary commitment to fulfill certain tasks. Thus, on the information board, a list of duties to be carried out was published:

1. Cleaning in *The Nest of Labor and Happiness Building, The Art Palace Building, The Mountain Eagles Building.*
2. Gardening: next to *The Nest, The Art Palace, The Mountain Eagles buildings.*
3. Cooking.
4. Sewing.
5. Joinery shop [7, p. 127 – 128].

Next to the list of duties, the “work sheet” would hang, in which the children from other commissions or groups would sign up in advance. During the week, every child had to complete all the activities planned. Following the educator's advice, senior members could write diaries, describing their day and relationships with younger children.

The central place in the life of Children's Villages was given to the industrial school, which encompassed comprehensive (providing for the formation of the outlook and formal knowledge, necessary for further life) and industrial (aiming at developing professional vocational skills, usually necessary for a particular career) schools. In accord with the “Internal Order Rules for Children of the Senior Concentrum”, every student had to take both academic and vocational classes seriously: for instance, he/she had to come to the industrial part of the school at 8 a.m. to work (with the working hours for the children under 14 years of age – 3 hours a day, for those older – 4 hours a day). The industrial school was the main educational and industrial centre of the Children's Village's life, its art workshop, which combined such functions as labor and discipline organization, the development of independent living skills and respect for oneself and peers. The importance attached to the labor and the labour principle in the organization of the child's life at that time is illuminated by the fact that classes in the vocational school were

conducted in the morning, whereas comprehensive school was to take place in the afternoon.

Special attention was given to the use of those objects and tools that were made by the children, for example:

- 1) visual aids for a particular course of study (measuring devices, geometric figures models; tools and instruments to be used in the laboratories in chemistry, physics, natural science classes; machinery models, constructions to visualize certain aspects of social studies and geography);
- 2) school furniture, equipment for laboratories, workshops, clubs; and
- 3) objects intended for everyday personal use by students and their families [12, p. 90].

Along with the skills that were important for the basic production processes, children had to acquire knowledge in the scientific approach to labor organization. They were to master design (work-related drawing, graphics, modeling); budgeting; work planning; timely supply of instruments and materials; time management (computation of time necessary for different tasks); distribution of certain functions (labor distribution); systemic self-monitoring of the work; material accountancy; reporting; participation in production meetings.

Didactic material was visualized in accord with the available in the Village workshops. The curriculum was composed on the basis of the labor principle where the following methods prevailed: research, field trips, active labor, and laboratory methods. Some teams worked in the communal institutions of the Village, others – in the workshops. Bigger communities were subdivided into desyatka (groups of ten people, the tens), headed by desyatnyk (the foreman) and a secretary, who were responsible for keeping the attendance record and the register according to the form: date; tasks to be fulfilled; the nature of the work to be done and the methods used; unfulfilled tasks; remarks; notes.

The tasks for labor education were selected in regard to specific principles and were distributed and corresponded to the age and individual capabilities of every child. Introduction to the labor processes in the Village's workshops followed the

consistency principle: from the easiest tasks and the tasks that could be performed quickly.

For instance, junior groups were introduced to woodwork, while seniors were allowed to do metalwork. In the seventh group, the children could participate in more complicated processes using industrial machines and other equipment.

Work measurement was an important issue in the polytechnization process. Children had to spend working in the workshops no less than 6 hours per week, which were included in the schedule. But the workshops were open for the children to come and work individually in their free time. In the workshops, children were divided into groups according to their age.

Many educators stated that labor at school should be of community service nature, otherwise “it will fall short of being a valuable means for social education, but, on the one hand, will turn into the process of acquiring a number of skills and, on the other hand, into a “methodological tool”, which helps to illustrate the material learned” [12, p. 93].

Community work in children’s villages was subdivided into curricular and extracurricular.

- 1) curricular community work consisted of the organization of school life, working in centers, preparing performances; student-government, “submission to the community and peer influence through “the public opinion”; and
- 2) extracurricular activities directed at organizing various campaigns (The Homeless Day, The Birds day, The Tree-Planting Day); building connections with tenants’ associations and working with them on culture and sanitary issues; cooperation with rural schools, factories, villages [12, p. 93].

Theoretical knowledge necessary for the students’ activities was built during mathematics, physics, chemistry classes. The content of academic disciplines was determined by labor processes, was to give students the theoretical explanations of certain phenomena, included the tasks on budgeting and making visuals and tools, etc. Moreover, students were introduced to the history of technology, various

processing techniques (wood, metal, and fibers), the history of labor, the scientific basis and different methods of production organization.

For the successful implementation of polytechnization, the laboratory and research method was used. Children were introduced to the industrialization and agriculture with the help of field trips to factories, plants, workshops, gardens, technology and agricultural museums.

The effectiveness of the polytechnization process was also determined by a number of organizational tools. One of them was the size of groups. It was recommended that the number of students working under the supervision of one tutor should not exceed 20. In practice, though, this recommendation was observed to the extent to which the conditions allowed.

Several possible solutions to deal with the problem of group size were proposed:

- 1) the class can work under the guidance of two supervisors simultaneously;
- 2) the lectures on labor are scheduled to a later time and are conducted with fewer people present;
- 3) one part of the class works in one workshop (for example, woodworking), another – in a different one (metalwork). After half a year, the groups switch their working locations [5, p. 57]. But it was critical not to violate the norms: groups 1 – 4 (1 – 4 grades) had to work at least two hours weekly, while groups 5 – 7 were obliged to work for three hours a week.

In schools that embraced the principle of polytechnism in their work, the technical interests of children and their organization were given priority. “This is particularly important, since the design projects developed by children have a great pedagogical value for us, demonstrating children’s technical interests, their creative ideas, which yet have to be psychologically processed, their will and initiative” [2, p. 64].

Introducing polytechnism in Soviet schools had enormous impact on the organization of career counseling, namely on the acquisition and development of professional interests and gifts by students. The best way to study the interests of

young people was to let them see certain jobs and production processes related to them from the inside.

The following forms of career counseling were used in Soviet schools: firstly, the school had to provide the students with the polytechnic knowledge basis; secondly, it was responsible for the organization of career counseling.

Educators believed that students' study of labor should be of polytechnic nature. Thus, it is necessary to determine the essence of polytechnic education. This notion was interpreted as a system that was based on the study of various aspects of technology. "It implied the study of "natural technology" (nature) and materials technology, production tools and their mechanisms, the study of the moving power – energy. It should also incorporate such aspects as the geographical foundation of economic relations, the influence of extraction mechanism and processing techniques on the social labor forms and their relation to the social order" [6, p. 81].

Thus, the first step to be made in the organization of the children's technical interests was of paramount importance. This step was to study the technical interests of children. Most teachers agreed that, at the beginning, an extensive research must be conducted by research and pedagogical associations, research departments, and pedagogy research institutes. Its subject matter should include: 1) children's inventions, their nature, forms of manifestation; 2) children's interest in different kinds of labor; 3) the influence of the environment on child's technical skills, interests, the outcomes of his/her technical activities, etc. Proceeding from these tasks, schools had to develop, conduct, and process a survey of the technical interests of children (general and specific). The survey was to include the questions to clarify the origin of the technical interests (Why is the child interested? Did he/she read about it in a book? Did he see a model or a tool? Who (a friend or an adult) told him/her about it? Does he/she have any theoretical interest that he/she wants to bring to life, such as constructing a device to verify a theoretical statement? [2, p. 64]. The survey also included a number of questions about the industrial and technical environment of the child, his/her technical preparation, capabilities, etc.

In the course of the study of the technical interests of children in the Villages, three main forms to meet their technical demands and interests were determined:

“1) *a technology study group*, which can be attended by a large number of people and provide for the differentiation of interests;

2) *a workshop*, which allows to bring the technical ideas of children to life;

3) *a library*, which houses the necessary resources on technology to answer frequently asked questions”. These three forms had to be closely connected by means of “cooperative and well-organized efforts of “a triangle” – a physics teacher, a labor instructor, and a librarian” [2, p. 62].

Implementing pedagogical characteristics and observing the labor activity of children, two forms of interest in technology were distinguished: reading books about technology; modeling, designing, inventing. The library records testified to the interest of boys in two kinds of technology books: a) the books that describe the romance of technology; b) the books that help children work independently. The books of the second type encouraged the interest and desire to build, for instance, a radio receiver, a lantern, a glider model [2, p. 62].

In the 1920s, the Children’s Villages underwent profound changes, related to the polytechnization of the system of education in general. The example suitable for the illustration of the changes is the *Lenins’ke Children’s Village*.

At the beginning of 1927, The Inspectorate of Orphanages of the Kyiv Department of People’s Education, trying to bring more children to villages to work in agriculture, filed a petition for allocating land to establish a model farm and agricultural educational institution for the children from Kyiv orphanages. The implementation of this task was commissioned to the *Lenins’ke Children’s Village*.

For two years (1927 – 1929), the efforts of the children and the staff were devoted to economic and organization activities, the establishment of the school (the senior centrum of the agricultural seven-year school for 60 students of *the Lenin* and other orphanages). “The children who join the Mykols’ka Pustel’ community annually, and come there knowing nothing about agriculture and even being negative about it, after spending a trimester and under the supervision and influence of older students, change, acquire a new work ethics, develop caring for animals and an abiding interest in all things agricultural” the archive papers mention [3, p. 1 – 5].

On April 23, 1930, an extended Teachers' Board Meeting of the Children's Village was held, where the issues concerning polytechnization of the educational process in the *Lenins'ke* were discussed. Thus, the questions under debate were as follows: 1) What organizational forms for the polytechnization in education were determined by the People's Commissariat for Education? 2) Should agricultural component be included in the polytechnic school curriculum? 3) How will the work of polytechnic sector be related to the polytechnic school? 4) What reorganization procedures have to be carried to ensure partial transition to polytechnism in the third trimester? and 5) How will the polytechnization of the junior concentrum (primary school) be organized? etc.

Political and polytechnic education was to become the integral parts of the educational process. It was planned that some parts of the production process would be relocated to schools. Others would remain in the factories and plants as a convenient tool for the specification of students' knowledge about the production process. The outcome of this meeting was the resolution that emphasized that "the subject of study should be "labor", whereas other materials addressed by schools are "methods". It is obligatory to help children to understand the peculiarities of agricultural labor, because we intend to provide them not only with special or industrial, but also polytechnic education. Thus, we see the problem broader", the documents stated [10, p. 44].

The teaching staff of the Village established two committees: the first was in charge of developing polytechnic school's curriculum; the second was to reorganize of the Children's Village school.

Unfortunately, the polytechnization of the *Lenins'ke Children's Village* was never fulfilled. Trying to assert this idea's right-to-life, the staff appealed to the People's Commissariat for Education: "there exists no special committee that could study the transition of a seven-year school to polytechnic education", that is why the exclusion of children will ruin children's stimuli to labor, be a threat to prospects and existence of *the Lenins'ke*. The Village itself had all conditions – economic and educational – to make the transition to polytechnism: social education and industrial orientation were in place, all children spent 10 hours in workshops and at factories

and plants, which was not done in any other school in Kyiv. “Every child in our Village has study time, personal time, and time allocated for production and learning proper, which turns him/her into an individual adjusted to modern life conditions. We have the right to implement the system of polytechnic education”, the minutes of the Children’s Village Board urged [11, p. 39].

It should be stated that the aforementioned event was followed up by the Order of the People’s Commissariat for Education requiring the reorganization of the *Lenins’ke Children’s Village*, which later ceased to exist.

The *Odessa Children’s Village* was virtually the only social education institution that became the model of polytechnization. Thus, since SY 1940 – 1941, it operated turneries, locksmith’s workshops, joiner’s shops, sewing workshops; the foundry, sawmill, and the pride of the Village – electromechanical workshop were launched. Such substantial resource and technological base became the foundation for a trade school, later called Trade School 1. After the war, the premises of the Children’s Village were given to Trade School 1, which became well known in the former Soviet Union.

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Філімонова Т. В. Політехнізація й освітні процеси в дитячих містечках України (20 – 30-і роки ХХ ст.)

У статті визначено й проаналізовано суспільно-історичні, педагогічні причини активізації ідеї політехнізації в освітній практиці на початку ХХ ст., висвітлено завдання політехнізації освіти. Особливу увагу приділено розгляду громадської роботи учнів у дитячих містечках. Наведено досвід упровадження самообслуговування різними дитмістечками УРСР та Польщі. Висвітлено експериментальні спроби реалізації політехнізації шкіл дитячих містечок. Визначено переваги політехнізації дитмістечок та наведено чинники, які завадили реалізації цього проекту.

Ключові слова: політехнізація, диференціація, дитячі містечка.

Филимонова Т. В. Политехнизация и образовательные процессы в детских городках Украины (20 – 30-е годы ХХ в.)

В статье определены и проанализированы общественно-исторические, педагогические причины активизации идеи политехнизации в образовательной практике в начале ХХ в., рассматриваются задания политехнизации образования. Особое внимание уделено изучению общественной работы учеников в детских городках. Приведён опыт введения самообслуживания разными детгородками УССР и Польши. Отражены экспериментальные попытки реализации политехнизации школ детских городков. Определены преимущества политехнизации детгородков и приведены факторы, которые препятствовали реализации данного проекта.

Ключевые слова: политехнизация, дифференциация, детские городки.

Philimonova T. V. Polytechnization and Educational Process in Ukrainian Children's Villages (1920s –1930s)

The article analyzes social and historical, as well as pedagogical preconditions that gave prominence to the idea of polytechnization of education at the beginning of the 20th Century. The tasks of such polytechnization are discussed. Special attention

is given to the community services of students in the children's villages. The article also describes the practice of introducing self-service and self-support in different children's villages of the USSR and Poland. The experimental polytechnization of the schools affiliated to the children's villages are discussed. The advantages of polytechnization of children's villages and factors that constrained the realization of this project are analyzed.

Key words: polytechnization, differentiation, children's villages.

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