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Organization of Pupil Government in Teaching Activities of Stanislav Shatskii (through the example of Rural Summer School-Colony “The Invigorating Life”)

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Abstract

This paper attempts to analyze the educational work of Stanislav Shatskii which was aimed at the formation and development of pupil government. His first pedagogical experiments were carried out in the early twentieth century. He made a great contribution to the development of pedagogical theory and practice. The Russian educator Stanislav Shatskii paid a lot of attention to the formation of a children's team, the development of pupil government in the learning process. He organized educational and research work in experimental school-colonies. Its purposes, structure and functions were one-of-a-kind in the world. The educational model of Stanislav Shatskii can serve as a basic matrix for the specialized education of modern Russia, as it contains the grounds, means and mechanisms for the implementation of learning and educational strategies that meet the interests of society, mentality and social basis of the Russian people.

Keywords: Thomas Shu, pupil government, settlers, “The Settlement”, “The Invigorating Life”, Narkompros (People’s Commissariat of Education).

1. Introduction

Stanislav Shatskii (1878–1934) was a Russian and Soviet educator, who devoted his entire teaching career to the creation of a new school. Shatskii’s pedagogical activities began in 1905, when he was engaged in the creation of a system of out-of-school and preschool work with children. Shatskii and his colleagues developed the so-called “Russian system of education”. This system was dominated by a broad social approach, which allowed giving children an all-round

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development (labor, physical, aesthetic). In Shatskii's opinion, self-organization and autonomy played an important role in the activities of children's groups. Shatskii saw pupil government as an instrument of settlers' organization, as well as a stage of socialization, allowing pupils to gain the necessary skills for adult life. Many of his pedagogical ideas were recognized as innovative and advanced ones not only in Russia but also abroad.

2. Materials and Methods

The documents of Scientific archive of the Russian Academy of Education, the pedagogical works of Stanislav Shatskii and his colleagues, the works of other Russian researchers devoted to the activities of Shatskii served as sources in the presented study. The analysis of archival sources and scientific pedagogical literature has made it possible to form the theoretical basis of our study.

The system-structural analysis is used to model the structure of pupil government of the school-colony "The Invigorating Life" (*transliteration of Cyrillic pronunciation in Latin letters – Bodraya Zhizn'*).

The use of general scientific methods of research: systematization, comparison, generalization of data made it possible to characterize the main stages of Stanislav Shatskii's educational activities in terms of defining their social and pedagogical significance.

3. Discussion

At the beginning of XX century, the theory of free education was popular among the leading Russian educators. The representatives of this educational direction in the Russian pedagogy are L.N. Tolstoy, I.I. Gorbunov-Posadov, K.N. Wentzel, etc. Shatskii also shared the ideas of free education at the beginning of his pedagogical career. He admired the thoughts of L.N. Tolstoy about the need for consolidation of students into a single united community, the development of creative imagination and artistic education of children ([Scientific archive of the Russian Academy of Education of the Russian Federation, F. 1, archival unit 195, P. 15](#)).

The works of pre-revolutionary researchers who were engaged in the study of pedagogical activities of Stanislav Shatskii include a few scientific papers of his fellow colleagues. Thus, the Russian teacher and architect A.U. Zelenko analyzes the collaborative pedagogical work with Shatskii on the creation and development of the children's community "The Settlement" in his article "Modern reformers of education and upbringing" ([Scientific archive of the Russian Academy of Education of the Russian Federation F. 1, archival unit 4, P. 5](#)). In another work, "Conversations with the reader. Family or public education", A. U. Zelenko considers the experience of children's institutions' organization which was headed by Shatskii. He gives examples of pedagogical techniques aimed at creative and environmental education of children ([Zelenko, 1912](#)).

Quite a large number of scientific works was devoted to Stanislav Shatskii's pedagogical activities in Soviet times. In 1923 there was published an article by academician M.N. Skatkin "The first Experimental Station for Public Education". It analyzed the results of the Station's activities for four years. M.N. Skatkin revealed the main tasks and directions of children's collective development based on the pedagogical theory of Stanislav Shatskii ([Skatkin, 1923](#)).

D.S. Bershadskaya in her work "Pedagogical views of S. Shatskii" studies the activities of the Russian educator related to the organization and development of the colony "The Invigorating Life" ([Bershadskaya, 1960](#)).

In the textbook "History of pedagogics" there were highlighted the main stages of the creative career of an outstanding teacher in the article by A.N. Volkovsky and M.N. Skatkin "S. Shatskii, his pedagogical views and activities" ([Konstantinov, 1955](#)).

In 1962 and 1965 V.I. Shatskaya, M.N. Skatkin prepared the collection of S. Shatskii's works in four volumes for the publication, which included both published works and unpublished articles, shorthand notes of his reports and speeches.

In her work "Interrelation of creative ideas and S. Shatskii's experience with the concepts and practice of foreign pedagogics" G.Yu. Maksimova reveals factors and indicators of Shatskii's activities interaction with the ideas of foreign educators, many of which reveal the nature and principles of pupil government ([Maksimova, 1991](#)).

There are a number of modern studies that are devoted to the problem of studying the forms of institutionalization of socio-cultural modernization of children's education in specialized educational institutions ([Abramov et al., 2017](#)).

Among the foreign researchers of pedagogical activities of Stanislav Shatskii it is worth noting such authors as O. Anweiler, (Anweiler, 1966), S. Hessen, and N. Hans (Hessen, 1933), L. Wilson (Wilson, 1928). Modern foreign studies of Shatskii's educational activities include a work by American author Parlett V. "Overcoming of cultural worlds by means of a rural school: educational vision, local self-government and rural experience of Kaluga school system of S. Shatskii, 1919-1931". This work describes Shatskii's activities on development of preschool organizations network and rural schools of the first and second stage in Soviet Russia (Partlett, 2004). Another article by Parlett V. "Cultural Revolution in rural school: Kaluga experimental station of S. Shatskii, 1919-1932", considers the process of organizing experimental stations of The People's Commissariat of Education of the RSFSR (Partlett, 2005).

4. Results

The work on organizing pupil government began since the establishment of "The Settlement" by S. Shatskii in 1905. The idea of this organization was borrowed from the American clubs. The purpose of such clubs was social assistance to poor children, which was expressed in making them literate, crime prevention, providing social services. The club of American worker Thomas Shu was one of the most popular in the United States at the end of the XIX century. In this club they both made children literate and put them to a trade. The main method of socialization was the game. But most importantly, this club created a pupil government with an elected council which addressed many pressing issues, including financial ones. All the leading teachers of Europe, including Russia, were delighted with the ideas of the society "The Settlement". The new children's organization did not last long; it was closed in 1908 for the spread of socialist ideology. Shatskii was arrested. Shatskii founded the first club organizations for the children of the Moscow suburbs. In 1909 Shatskii founded a new society "Children's work and rest". The activities of these out-of-school institutions were purposed for a wide independent work of children, the use of labor as a means of education. Shatskii claimed: "...upbringing is the organization of children's life, the object of education is the child, and in a child we, first of all, appreciate the fact that he is a growing organism" (Shatskii, 1962). The educator identified several types of children's life: social life, mental life, art, physical education, play and work. Shatskii first used the term "health care". In 1911 Shatskii, with the support of philanthropist M. K. Morozova, created a summer labor colony "The Invigorating Life". The colony was located in Kaluga province.



Fig. 1. Stanislav Shatskii (1878-1934)



Fig. 2. Building of the society "Children's work and rest"

Valentina Shatskaya, the wife of Stanislav Shatskii, played an important role in the organization of the colony. It was in the colony that the theory of pupil government was developed and implemented, aimed at identifying “some consistent patterns in the development of children's society” (Shatskaya, Shatskii, 1924). The school-colony “The Invigorating Life” was a striking example of an innovative experiment in pedagogy.

“The Invigorating Life” was a self-sustainable institution. There were built the following facilities in the territory of the colony: Shatskii’s house (there were also an administrative office and a music room in Shatskii’s house), a school building, a cook-house and a summer canteen house, a club-canteen building, a cellar, a power station, workshops, a dormitory, a dormitory for teachers, a club, a stadium, a radio antenna, a cattle yard, a vegetable garden, a fruit garden.



Fig. 3. Buildings of the colony “The Invigorating Life” (1911)

Stanislav Shatskii was a leading participant in educational experiments and reforms. In 1919, he created the first experimental station which included fourteen primary schools, two secondary schools, a central school-colony “The Invigorating Life”, six kindergartens, three regional libraries, seven reading houses (village reading rooms), a set of children's clubs and a center of pedagogical training. The purpose of these schools was to educate rural students and culturally transform the village.

Stanislav Shatskii thought about the development of a children's team and identified a certain pattern and relationships. This idea is reflected in one of the works: “The observations on the life of a children's collective lead to the following conclusion: between the main constituents of children's life – manual work, play, art, mental and social development, there is a certain relationship, there is a constant interaction, and ultimately, those or other changes in one direction (this applies to the forms of children's activities, and their organization) cause corresponding changes in another area” (Shatskaya, Shatskii, 1924).

The educator attached importance to the process of formation and development of children's groups. “To work together with children, – wrote Stanislav Shatskii, – it means to recognize enormous influence of a children's society on children. The school must be interested in the development of children's organizations involved in the formation of life. Then it will be easier for it (the school) to function. Our pioneers and Komsomol members, uniting the most energetic elements of our youth, can provide great support here for the school” (Shatskaya, Shatskii, 1924). Shatskii attached great importance to pupil government. He wanted as many children as possible to participate in the various forms of collective management. It is important to educate the children’s ability to subordinate their desires to the rules of the collective. According to Shatskii, an

important detail in the development of pupil government, was related to the creation of the general assembly of children.

The teaching activities of Shatskii included the development of fundamental new forms of children's collective education taking into account the principle of self-government. In the work "My pedagogic career" Shatskii wrote, "...the questions of pupil government, which we have largely become accustomed to, and considered ourselves, probably not without reason, the pioneers in this area – made the formulation of new pedagogical problems especially close for us in..." (Shatskaya, Shatskii, 1924). It should be noted that outside the colony younger students were always subordinated to senior students.

The system of pupil government was based on several directions of the children's collective development: mental development, aesthetic development, labor education, social development. Joining all directions in one pedagogical model enhances social skills, promotes formation and development of the children's collective and pupil government.

I. *Mental development.* Shatskii believed that "the work of the mind directs life and satisfies the spirit of research" (Shatskaya, Shatskii, 1924). The colony had a school of two stages: stage 1 – grades 1–4, level 2 – grades 5–9. The school curriculum included subjects such as writing, mathematics, literature, physical education, music, as well as very popular lessons of tourism and staging. By 1925, the school had 200 children (88 of them lived in the colony, the rest came from the neighboring villages). Children of workers and employees from the suburbs of Moscow and children of the Kaluga province peasants studied at this school.

II. *Aesthetic development.* According to Stanislav Shatskii "...art makes life more beautiful and feeds the aesthetic sense" (Shatskaya, Shatskii, 1924). In the colony, the teachers cultivated in children love of painting, music, theater, literature. Shatskii himself performed operatic arias, and his wife delivered lectures on literature and art. There was organized a puppet theater for younger pupils. The children themselves made puppets and scenery for performances. With senior pupils the teachers staged performances of "Boris Godunov", "The Government inspector" (Russian: Ревизор, Revizor) which were also shown in rural clubs.

III. *Physical development* was based on the lessons of physical culture. At these lessons the teachers made stress on competitive sports. Shatskii attached great importance to the game as a means of training and education. "The game – wrote Shatskii, is a living laboratory of childhood, giving the flavor, the atmosphere of young life. In the game, in this special processing of vital material, there is the healthiest core of intelligent school of childhood" (Shatskii, 1962). As Shatskii stated: "The game repeats itself and adapts to life... it gives such a cheerful tone of common life" (Shatskii, 1964). Children played football, "knucklebones" (a skillful cast of bones), ran. Here is how the game is described by one of the colony's pupils in the magazine "New Life" (Russian: Novaya Zhizn'): "The game has begun. The players standing still and shifting their feet with impatience. Controversial blow ... The players rush to the ball, trying to kick it ... " (Shatskaya, Shatskii, 1924). The children also loved to play Indians.

IV. *Labor education.* According to Shatskii, the main factor uniting the children's collective is socially useful work. "So, groundwork – material, disciplining and experienced, as claimed by Shatskii, is provided by physical labor, serving children and being feasible for them. Life is organized and made easier by business self-government" (Shatskaya, Shatskii, 1924). "We should speak about such an organization of children's work, – wrote Shatskii, which is feasible, accessible to children, but it must be serious. We need such child labor, which would be full of sense and rise" (Scientific archive of the Russian Academy of Education, F. 1, Archival unit 295, p. 114).

According to Stanislav Shatskii, labor is another important element necessary for the formation of an independent personality. For example, children were able to cook, grow crops, sew clothes, clean rooms and more in the colony "The Invigorating Life".



Fig. 4. Hay harvest in the colony (1925)

But labor should not be punishment or some chore. In that case, it will only have a negative effect. Shatskii claimed that labor must be systematic, replaceable and according to children's possibilities. Work must bring children positive emotions and real joy. Labor activities of pupils should be under the close attention of teachers who skillfully and tactfully direct, support and encourage them. The purpose of labor, according to Shatskii, is not only to master basic household skills, labor – is, above all, a tool that organizes a children's team on the principles of creativity, friendship and mutual assistance.

IV. *Social development.* The importance of this direction was to acquaint pupils with the rules of the school-colony, with subsequent adaptation to the conditions of life in society. But the formation of such qualities as discipline, obedience, sense of duty is not enough to educate the individual of a pupil. Therefore, the principle of pupil government existed in the colony, which allowed children to solve production, household, mental and creative tasks on their own.

The first pupils – 14 “troubled ones” lived in the summer colony (Korolyov, Korneichik, Ravkik, 1961). Afterwards “The Invigorating Life” switched over to a year-round functioning. As a result, hundreds of children lived in “The Invigorating Life”, the same number of pupils came to school from the neighboring villages.

The structure of pupil government was being gradually built in the colony. In the first year of its existence there were singled out 5 “senior settlers”, aged 15–19 (Shatskaya, 1961). Many of these “seniors” were learning trades at other institutions, there were those who were working at a factory. The main task of the “senior settlers” was to provide labor education for the younger pupils through their own example.

All organizational and economic issues were solved at the meetings of the settlers that were held daily. The structure of pupil government in the “The Invigorating Life” consisted of the following elements:

- 1) *Chairman of the meeting* – managed the work of the General meeting;
- 2) *General Assembly of the settlers* – a collegiate governing body. At the assembly all economic and organizational issues were solved and regulations were approved. At the General Assembly, the children chose the Chairman of the meeting, a nurse, the head of the laundry, a housekeeper, who led the economic accounting. Elections were a key instrument of pupil government. The settlers openly expressed their views, denounced laziness and irresponsibility of some children who could not cope with the orders of the Assembly;
- 3) *the editors of the magazine “New life”* – the magazine published decisions of the colony, a daily report on the cook-house work, a two-week report on the economy, it informed about all the important events in the colony, the magazine also published children's stories and poems, notes on important events, reasoning of educators about the life and development of the colony.

The editorial Board of the magazine also acted as a kind of generator of managerial and economic ideas and suggestions. The pages of the magazine raised questions which both the future of the colony and the future of individual pupils depended on. As an example, here are some of these suggestions from the magazine:

1. To collect all the regulations of the colony.
2. To draw up a two-week report (a task for a housekeeper).
3. To make a daily report on the cook-house and put up on the wall
- ... 6. What are we short of?
7. Do we need meetings?
8. Do we need punishment? If not, what should replace them?
9. How well does everything go? If it does poorly, then why?
11. What do I want from the colony in the future?
12. Do the senior settlers provide benefit for the colony?
13. What do I want to do in the future?
14. Do settlers get along with each other?..” (Shatskaya, Shatskii, 1924).

The colony formed a whole system of customs and rules that formed the basis of social development of children and public life. The punishment for breaking the rules of the colony – confession before a group. Shatskii watched the confrontation between the two phenomena: the “set” which seeks freedom and fun, sometimes arbitrariness and the “colony” – a labor organization. The punishment for breaking the rules of the colony – a public admission of guilt, and correction is possible only through the labor, successful studies and social activities. Those who did not accept the rules of the colony, and supported the “set” were forced to leave.

4) “welcoming” commission consisted of 2 settlers: a boy and a girl. The children accompanied guests, showed them the colony, and were busy with food and accommodation (see: Fig. 5).

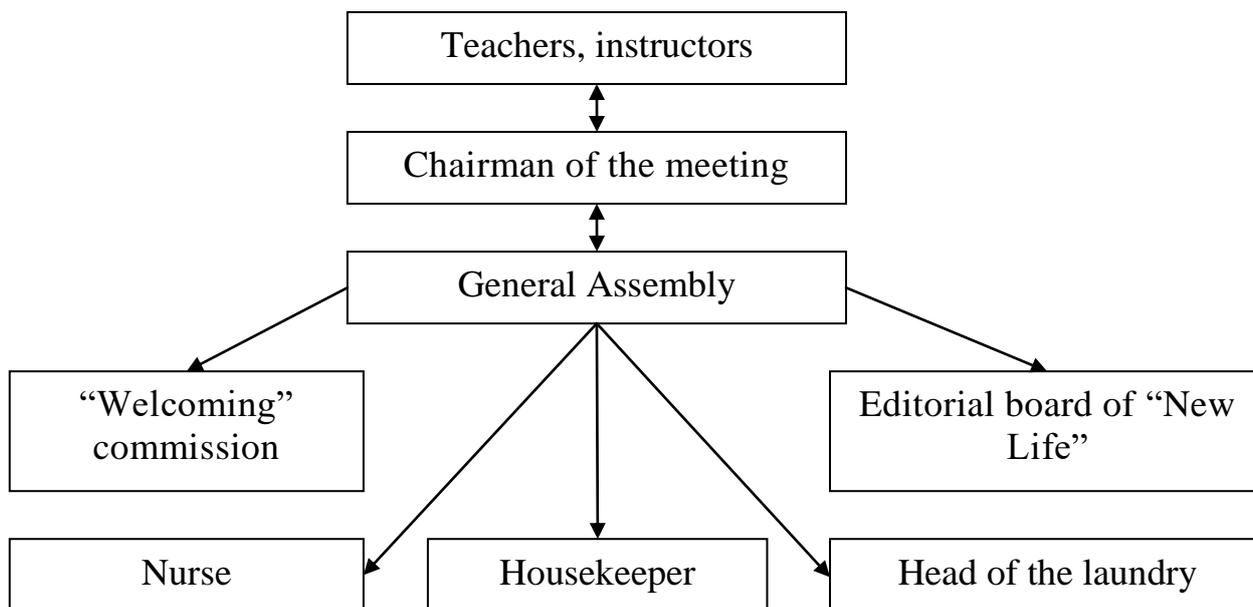


Fig. 5. Structure of pupil government in the school-colony “The Invigorating Life”

According to Stanislav Shatskii, the full development of a child was the main goal of teaching activities in the school-colony “The Invigorating Life”. The combination of mental work with the physical development of a child, socially useful work, aesthetic education allowed teachers and pupils to achieve remarkable results. Teaching methods of Shatskii were based on an independent search for a solution to the problem posed to a child. Independent activity contributed to the development of logical thinking, formed such qualities as responsibility, discipline.

Owing to the success of the pedagogical experiment in the school-colony “The Invigorating Life”, Kaluga branch of the first experimental station soon became the flagship of innovative education in Soviet Russia. Every year thousands of teachers, officials and cultural workers visited

the station hoping to export their ideas and approaches to other settlements. The teachers and representatives of Narkompros together made presentations at educational conferences, consulted widely with international experts, and actively sought to spread the experience of the station. Shatskii became one of the leading experts in the People's Commissariat of Education. He has formulated a program for new Soviet schools.

5. Conclusion

Studying Stanislav Shatskii's pedagogical heritage, it should be noted that many ideas in the organization of pupil government were adopted from the representatives of the world teaching thought. The very idea of pupil government in the early twentieth century was mainly spread in the pedagogy of Western European countries. It is worth noting that these adoptions were mainly in form, but not in content. Stanislav Shatskii was aware of the achievements of foreign pedagogics and applied the best practices of children's organizations in his teaching ideas. Shatskii also understood that pure copying of foreign teaching samples would only harm the educational process as a whole. It was necessary to create a fundamentally new pedagogical theory that would successfully suit the national system of education. Shatskii managed to do it. The summer labour school-colony "The Invigorating Life" created by the Russian teacher was very highly appreciated by the pedagogical community of the USSR. The school-colony was considered by the educators and leaders of People's Commissariat of Education as an experiment that enables to explore the specific development of the children's team. And, in Stanislav Shatskii's opinion, this school had a special environment that made it possible to establish harmonious interrelation between mental, aesthetic, physical, labor and social development of children, which can be supported quite effectively under the conditions of pupil government.

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