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## Educational System of Victor N. Soroka-Rosinsky: from Coercion to Voluntariness

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### Abstract

The article presents the teaching techniques of Victor N. Soroka-Rosinsky. Those techniques are aimed at the pupils of closed-typed educational institutions to form voluntariness. In general, they represent a phased educational system evolving from coercion to conscious self-initiated activities. At the final stage, voluntariness is the result of teachers' actions, when it is transformed into self-activity and self-organization of the students themselves on the basis of collective creativity and competition. Achieving such a state is the ultimate goal of educational influence, when a self-active, creative, voluntary initiative is set as the main life strategy by each student and the team as a whole.

At present, the system developed by Victor N. Soroka-Rosinsky can become the initial basic matrix in the implementation of educational and morale building strategies in working with "troubled" teenagers to form their voluntariness as a necessary and socially significant trait of their personalities. It is volunteerism that currently meets the interests of the society and social basis of the Russian people.

**Keywords:** Victor N. Soroka-Rosinsky, education, teaching techniques, coercion, voluntariness.

### 1. Introduction

Victor N. Soroka-Rosinsky (1882-1960) – Russian and soviet educator and psychologist.

He began his educational work in 1906 in secondary schools of Petrograd and the Military Medical Academy after graduating from the Faculty of History and Philology of St. Petersburg University. In 1920 he headed the school of social and individual education named after

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Dostoevsky (School-commune named after F.M. Dostoevsky, or SHKID as abbreviated in Russian), Victor N. Soroka-Rosinsky proposed, justified, and tested in practice his own educational system for troubled teenagers with deviant behavior.

The main educational idea was to form children's creative abilities. The main way to solve this problem is mental labour, independent work of students.

The educator pursued humanistic goals when using the methods of business games, dramatizations, competitions in the educational practice. The aim was to transform the lives of youth into constant self-fulfillment of the individual, constant self-creativity.

Many ideas of Victor Soroka-Rosinsky served as the basis for the organization of training and education of orphaned pupils of closed-type educational institutions, including Suvorov military and Nakhimov naval schools.

## **2. Materials and methods**

The works of Russian educators on a wide range of problems that were in the focus of attention of Victor Soroka-Rosinsky and his colleagues were used as the main information sources for writing this paper.

Comparative analysis of pedagogical research of the second decade of the XXI century allowed us to form the theoretical basis for studying, to structure and summarize necessary data. At the same time, voluntariness and coercion act as interrelated elements of one pedagogical system.

The use of general scientific research methods such as systematization, comparison and generalization of data made it possible to describe and characterize the main stages of voluntariness formation in closed-type educational institutions and define the socio-pedagogical significance of Soroka-Rosinsky's educational system.

## **3. Discussion**

At the end of 1920s scientific and journalistic literature showed interest in the educational technology of Victor N. Soroka-Rosinsky. In their book G. Belykh and L. Panteleev, being themselves the students of School-commune named after F.M. Dostoevsky (SHKID), for the first time introduced the portrait of their teacher (Belykh et al., 1927). His image is presented in dynamics. He learns, trusts and makes mistakes, sizes up and grows simultaneously with his pupils. Before us there appears the personality of a teacher, who is in search of mutual understanding with his students.

A.S. Makarenko, M. Gorky and N.K. Krupskaya also paid attention to the pedagogical experiments of Soroka-Rosinsky. Positive feedback came from Gorky who said that the educational system made by Soroka-Rosinsky created all the necessary conditions for the formation of new creative people (Gorky, 1933).

In his turn, Makarenko criticized the methods of work with Soroka-Rosinsky's students. He called his school a punishment cell with locked doors for troubled children (Makarenko, 1958). Nadezhda Krupskaya metaphorically called it the employee dormitory (Krupskaya, 1927). In her opinion, teaching techniques put forward intellectual development instead of the work activities. Thus that did not promote to becoming a Soviet personality. It is unlikely that such a statement can be accepted. Intelligence and work education are complementary categories. In School-commune named after F. M. Dostoevsky, Victor N. Soroka-Rosinsky for the first time applied methods of developing creativity in practice, both in educational and in extracurricular students' work. In itself it became innovation for that time. Hence, there were such contradictory assessments of well-known educators and public figures.

Partly, such negative judgments about the activities of Soroka-Rosinsky were not significantly reasoned, because they were based on a far from ideal image of a teacher, described in the book "Respublika SHKID" (Republic of ShKID) as an artistic fiction in any work of art.

In late 1950s of XX century, the controversial discussion over the pedagogical methods of Victor N. Soroka-Rosinsky started again. So, the studies of Z.I. Ravkin emphasize that Soroka-Rosinsky's educational system has allowed achieving positive results in the education of conscious discipline, in the development of initiative among students and instilling a Communist attitude towards work (Ravkin, 1959).

L.R. Kabo in his book “Zhil na svete uchitel” (There lived a teacher in the world) emphasizes the humanistic orientation of Soroka-Rosinsky’s methods, which opened the advantages and skills of the Soviet pedagogical school to the world (Kabo, 1970).

But the 1970s were not without criticism. L. Gordin concludes that the system of disciplinary methods used in Soroka-Rosinsky’s practice were unsuccessful. According to Gordin, it led to conflicts between teachers and students (Gordin, 1971). It is unlikely that this conclusion can be considered fair, since the division of students into categories, the introduction of controlled self-government, on the contrary, contributed to the resolution of conflicts.

R.B. Vendrovskaya made a special contribution to the study of Soroka-Rosinsky’s educational system. In her opinion, the main achievement of Soroka-Rosinsky was in the ability to direct impulses coming from the outside and finding an echo in the school environment. All this led to self-understanding, social activity, the formation of a personality (Vendrovskaya, 1991). In addition, the researcher says that the synthesis of national and social factors runs like a golden thread through the pedagogical heritage of Soroka-Rosinsky (Vendrovskaya, 1993).

G.B. Kornetov thinks that the Soroka-Rosinsky approach is not only a historical and pedagogical one, but it is also a perspective one, focused on the future (Kornetov, 1994).

The analysis of educational strategies of Victor N. Soroka-Rosinsky is presented in the works of A.T. Gubko (1991) and L.A. Kirsanova (1994). The works emphasize the special role of a teacher in the formation of methods to consolidate students’ socially significant qualities of their personalities.

Owing to the research of E.A. Zarechnova and S.N. Chislova, there were revealed the features of the national education and democratization of schools (Zarechnova, 1991); there were characterized methods for the prevention and overcoming of troubled teenagers’ problems (Chislova, 2001); there was presented a modern and prognostic significance of Victor N. Soroka-Rosinsky’s ideas and views on the problem of overcoming the conflict situations of troubled students and shown the possibilities of using these ideas in the theory and practice of modern pedagogy (Butkus, 2017).

In the author’s research on the modernization of secondary specialized military education, Soroka-Rosinsky’s educational system is presented as a starting matrix for the consolidation of such qualities of a personality as diligence, creativity, perseverance, collectivism, friendly mutual assistance, which, at present, is so important for the future officer of the Russian army (Abramov, 2017).

The foreign literature has repeatedly claimed that the implementation of personality formation ideas in different social environments is based on freedom in the teaching process. So, according to J.G. Newman, it is freedom that becomes the main condition for the improvement of a personality and the realization of its creative abilities (Newman, 1960).

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). The problem of creating and developing the Soviet school system on the basis of creative education and children’s self-government is considered in the article by O. Chuikov, devoted to the activities of the first experimental schools (Chuikov et al., 2018).

Kaganovich says that Victor N. Soroka-Rosinsky was able to create such conditions under which half-starved, half-naked children were able to forget about the feeling of hunger and cold. They united in a single team and immersed themselves in an almost fabulously fascinating process of acquiring knowledge. The formation of children’s personalities took place in the atmosphere of thirst for knowledge and collective creativity (Kaganovich, 2007).

#### **4. Results**

Victor N. Soroka-Rosinsky theoretically grounded and field-tested a unique system of educating troubled orphaned teenagers. The conceptual idea of this system was that of developing children’s creative abilities. Soroka-Rosinsky singled out the main elements of his system. They are fundamental educational training (10 lessons daily) and independent creative activity of pupils. This makes it possible for these children to blow off their steam because they are full of violent restless energy. The educator also widely used the method of long games: dramatizations, plays, journalistic creativity, competitions.

Victor Soroka-Rosinsky put much emphasis on self-education. In his work “Psychology and self-education” (1907) he raised the question of creating a special science – avtogogika, which could help students shape their personality. Soroka-Rosinsky tried recruiting creative educators to work in his school-commune named after Dostoevsky. He was one of the first to study the psychology of teachers and offered a kind of typology of “breeds” of teachers: theorists, realists, utilitarians, intuitivists (actors).

While creating his own educational system Victor N. Soroka-Rosinsky and his teaching staff were guided by the main goal – to turn the life of young people in the continuous self-affirmation of an individual, in constant self-creation (Gubko, 1991).

Victor N. Soroka-Rosinsky found interesting and original solutions for training and education of “troubled” children:

- division of students into groups depending on their intellectual and creative abilities – each student has its own technique, its own pace and form of consolidation of socially significant qualities of a personality based on the individual features of students;
- cognitive mental load for students must be necessarily accompanied by other types of work in the artistic and game forms, which in their turn are included in various academic disciplines;
- using public reviews of pupils’ achievements in everyday practices, which could encourage pupils to make something on their own, stimulate active learning, and search activities.
- organization of creative associations of students, when each of the students had the opportunity for free debate on all issues in the absence of strict control on the part of tutors.
- opportunities for students to realize their creative forces in out-of-lesson-time.
- organizing the study of works of Russian and foreign literature classics should become students’ own desire and their necessary need;
- arranging excursions to theaters, factories, places of revolutionary and military glory is an integral part of the educational process in extracurricular time.

The educational system of Victor N. Soroka-Rosinsky was particularly important due to the fact that it could switch the destructive activity of pupils into public importance, conscious, creative, focus on higher spiritual values (Gubko, 1991).

Victor Soroka-Rosinsky empirically proved:

- ...that the foundations of national education, including traditions of oral folk arts, religious and labor education, should be built in the family.
- even children with deviant behavior have creative potential that can be revealed in them;
- use of didactic games in educational process, which gives a good result: underachieving students become stable C students.
- use of a ranked list of students, in accordance with the estimates of their daily activities allows to motivate students to achieve more in their studies and work.
- the best age for the implementation of educational practices – grades 5-7 (Khristoforov, 2007).

In general, we can agree with such conclusions, because at present they have found their recognition and application in pedagogical practices. For example, the portfolio, which reflects the achievements of students, score-rating system are used in schools and universities. Defining the optimal age for the implementation of educational strategies can be argued. But Victor Soroka-Rosinsky himself admitted that working with the seniors was hard and he did not do it well.

Unlike another outstanding educator, A.S. Makarenko, Victor N. Soroka-Rosinsky adhered to his educational system in his practical activity; the main emphasis was on the development of intellectual abilities of students to work and create.

The collective plays a special part in the educational system of Soroka-Rosinsky. The educator singles out several levels of the collective’s evolution: the crowd, the herd instinct, the organized collective, the active group as the organizational core (Gubko, 1991).

The formation and development of the collective in dynamics was considered through the implementation of the principle – from coercion to voluntariness, which is based on activity, self-government and competitiveness. Both teachers and students must work together without opposing “they” and “we”. Only when everyone sincerely believes in a prosperous future it is possible to get around some complex pedagogical problems. Students will make their way in life, become worthy citizens of their country, and their teachers will consider their mission accomplished and will be proud of them.

In the first half of the 20th century, pedagogical and psychological science developed a discussion on how educational practices can combine two mutually exclusive actions towards students – voluntariness and coercion.

Voluntariness is considered by us as the ability of an individual at his/her own will (choice) to create a public good, to cooperate, to perform a particular type of activity, including “unpopular ones” in the society. In its turn, coercion is conceived as dependence, subjection, violence (Efremova, 2000).

Based on the existing views in Western science, voluntariness can be interpreted as:

- free will (free choice);
- nocompensation (unpaid activity);
- noobligation (voluntary work in relation to family or friends);
- planfulness (planned activities);
- longevity (permanent, regular activity);
- organizational context (organized, collective work) (Cnaan et al., 1996).

According to foreign researchers, in the times of socialism voluntariness could only be forced and it caused resistance and distrust of Soviet citizens. The public sphere was perceived as a scene of public lies and pretence, and public activities served as a field for expressing false loyalty to the state. This led to total distrust and rejection of social life and social (volunteer) work (Voicu et al., 2009).

However, in his day it was Soroka-Rosinsky who empirically proved the opposite. In his “Pedagogical works” we find some answers to the resolution of this contradiction. The process of acquiring voluntariness by students is considered by him, firstly, as an action excluding coercion; secondly, as the final stage of pedagogical influence and, thirdly, as an equilibrium combination of coercion and voluntariness.

The first principle of mutual exclusion of voluntariness and coercion characterized the system of liberal pedagogical strategies implementation in the practices of education and upbringing in the old Imperial Russia.

According to the second principal, voluntariness and coercion are interrelated elements of the same pedagogical system. First, students are forced to do some work as a mandatory thing. Then, such a mandatory action becomes a conscious, necessary, and already voluntary choice of the students themselves. To achieve such a state is the ultimate goal of educational influence, when a self-creative voluntary initiative is set by each student and the collective as the basis of life strategy.

The third principle implies a certain distinction in the education of voluntary and coercive actions. At the same time, one part of school life develops in the order of obligation, the other – in the order of voluntariness, and these two processes complement each other, but do not mix (Soroka-Rosinsky, 2001).

While testing his theoretical ideas in practice, Victor N. Soroka-Rosinsky came to a conclusion that the education of voluntariness came to the fore and overtook the formation of collectivism, organization, strong-willed qualities of an individual. And voluntariness was in close relationship with these socially significant skills.

The test group was urban schoolchildren (85 % were the children of workers and employees), whose early childhood coincided with the devastation after the civil war, famine, homelessness and all moral vices of the time. Impunity and promiscuity, rudeness and insults, obscene language taken for bravado, disobedience and temper were typical features in the daily behavior of students.

At the first stage it was necessary to consolidate labor skills. To do this, Victor N. Soroka-Rosinsky divided the process of learning to work into three successive stages.

At the beginning, the pupils did not want to work, in every possible way they tried to evade from the committed tasks, referring to the fact that they would not work alone.

It got off the ground only when the task was set for each student individually and the work was carried out under the supervision of educators.

The attempts to influence the collective through the established system of self-government (meetings, elected chiefs) were of no use. Only after all pupils had got convinced that it was not possible to get out of public work, it proceeded. Students were beginning to get used to regular work. There was a significant difference between lazy and the hard-working students: as you had to work together, it mattered with whom one was working – with a hard-working student you finish the work quickly, and with a lazy one you have to work twice as much. In their turn, the educators

motivated pupils morally, praising the industrious and blaming the lazy ones, they tried to raise the spirit of competition in work. The students themselves became proud and in every possible way they showed off with their achievements

There were held in high esteem – agility, ability to work, ability to perform the committed task quickly and well. And such pupils began to enjoy authority with their comrades. Good monitors became the proper and useful organizers. As a result it was concluded that work should never be treated as punishment.

At the second stage, the main objective was the transition to collective lessons of labor activity. The class became the main unit of labor activity.

Pupils themselves, with the help of monitors organized their work. The spirit of competition was becoming noticeably stronger. Classes tried to break records to each other in cutting wood, working on the plot and were very proud of achieving collective leadership. The importance of self-government has significantly increased with such an organization.

The system of student self-government began to have its own hierarchy:

- responsible workers, as a rule, from among the monitors;
- simple performers (students on duty being appointed by monitors).

At the end of the second stage of voluntariness formation, there were significant changes in the system of public self-government. Thus, the election of elders was supplemented by personal initiative of students. The previously, unpopular minor positions (people responsible for cloakroom, ambulance room, etc.) were voluntarily occupied by sedulous, conscientious, hardworking pupils.

The third (final) stage was characterized by the fact that voluntariness was becoming not only the socially necessary aspect, but also an integral part of the way of life of the educational institution. Competition between classes, labor ambition reached the highest form of its development. Voluntariness has become widespread. Significant changes have taken place in the system of self-government. Instead of monitors' election the school began practicing their appointment by turns. The vast majority of pupils became involved in school life, actively participating in meetings and making suggestions to improve the life of the school.

As a result of practical development of his teaching methods Victor Soroka-Rosinsky came to the following conclusions:

- education of voluntariness is a series of stages that require the use of special methods;
- at the first stage, the goal of compulsory labor social activity, the use of coercive measures without verbal admonitions and the undesirability of any financial incentives measures is implemented; each individual is responsible for his/her work, each gets his/her individual lessons;
- at the next stage, habits to work are being fixed, there is formation of collective responsibility for the work performed; competition begins, both personal and collective; there is a transition to election to public positions; labor achievements are actively promoted; the main motivating factor for the best students is moral encouragement;
- at the third stage, it is necessary to encourage the spirit of ambition and collective competition in every possible way; it is also necessary to promote the importance of social work, strengthen the role of elected pupils, strive to expand the organizational labor core;
- the manifestation of ambition, the spirit of competition can be the basis for further innovations in the education of voluntariness;
- active educational work of teachers at the initial stage should be gradually transformed into self-activity and self-organization of the students themselves.

## **5. Conclusion**

One should note that many ideas of Victor Soroka-Rosinsky find their continuation not only in domestic pedagogy, but also in the practices of training and education in other countries, such as Finland, South Korea, which have become recognized leaders in the level and quality of education.

According to the opinion of Khristoforov, who was a researcher of the pedagogical heritage of the famous educator, Victor N. Soroka-Rosinsky did not have career growth but he was an absolute teacher, a teacher with a God-given talent. He combined the qualities of a scientist, a psychologist, the great historian, an expert on the Russian language and folklore, both foreign and domestic literature, an actor, a director, a singer and a musician, a man who perfectly spoke several foreign

languages, a soldier who had mastered the Suvorov science of victory. And all this had existed in the teaching profession. Not without reason he was called the Renaissance man (Khristoforov, 2007).

At the beginning of the 90s of the last century, Russia faced new challenges related to a growing number of children with deviant behavior. Modern society with the focus on individualism dictates its normative system of values and separates the individual from the collective. The idea "One for all and all for one" is becoming less relevant. In this regard, there is again an urgent need to refer to the pedagogical heritage of Victor N. Soroka-Rosinsky. It is voluntariness that can become the basis, the "core" of the human personality of the XXI century.

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