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“Free Will” Education in the Sergius I. Hessen’s Pedagogy of Culture

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Abstract

The article presents a theoretical interpretation of the philosophical and pedagogical conception of Sergius I. Hessen, the keynote of which is understanding education as an endless process of the spiritual development of a personality, “free will” education and focus of a personality on cultural values. Sergius I. Hessen’s conception of the unity of culture and pedagogy ‘paved the way’ into the European educational space for the Russian émigré community of the first half of the 20th century. Having generalized and rethought the experience and traditions of the world pedagogy, Sergius I. Hessen substantiated the promising ideas of younger generation education and upbringing in Europe. The philosophical and pedagogical heritage of the scientist is based on the postulates of the values of humanism, freedom and independence of individuals, their responsibility, solidarity and tolerance. Therefore, his scientific works were extremely in demand in the development of educational policy and school reforms in Italy, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Germany and France.

The conception of Sergius I. Hessen’s education content, in which the space of the world of culture is consistently expanding for a student, is more relevant than ever, since the renewal of the world by means of new cultural achievements is the main mission of future generations.

Keywords: Sergius I. Hessen, “free will” education, culture, pedagogy, collaboration, creativity.

1. Introduction

An endless series of technological, environmental, epidemiological and sociocultural challenges of the present have objectively generated a request for the world community to “be together”. At the same time, the problem of preserving individual ‘cultural codes’, achieving homeostasis between cultural tradition and innovation in the new global world remains extremely urgent. Science is trying to overcome this contradiction by creating various models and forms for

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education of different levels, in which, on the one hand, individual freedom and creativity would be the main priorities, and, on the other hand, special attention is paid to education of personalities whose creativity would serve the process of structuring their national culture as such.

In recent years, philosophers, historians, sociologists, and educators have been increasingly focusing their attention on the experience of the representatives of the Russian pedagogical émigré community of the first half of the 20th century, who, in a relatively short time, were able to create a unique cultural and educational space of the “Russian world”. Therefore, there is a real need for scientific reflection on the ideas of outstanding Russian pedagogical theorists and practitioners of pedagogical science, who, living in a foreign cultural environment, laid the foundation for the best education system in the world.

Sergius I. Hessen’s pedagogy of culture is in demand and need to be studied thoroughly, since the researcher’s philosophical and pedagogical conception is forward-looking and is built on the ideas of humanism, freedom and spirituality.

Analysis of recent publications on the problem. The scientific discourse on the creation of cultural strategies for the development of a personality at all levels of education is represented by a number of works. The works of Russian researchers such as A.Z. Beisenov and R.S. Musaeva (Beisenov et al., 2015), G.A. Bordovsky, S.A. Pisareva and A.P. Tryapitsyna (Bordovsky et al., 2018), V.E. Deryuga (Deryuga, 2017), Ya.D. Gushchin (Gushchin, 2021), E.V. Ivanov (Ivanov, 2020), N.A. Lurya (Lurya, 2017), A.V. Mudrik (Mudrik, 2018), I.N. Popova (Popova, 2017), T.P. Razbeglova (Razbeglova, 2019), L.E. Shaposhnikov (Shaposhnikov, 2016), E.E. Sedova (Sedova, 2019), M.V. Vorobiev (Vorobiev, 2017), L.N. Yakovenko (Yakovenko, 2015), O.A. Yanutsh (Yanutsh, 2018), M.Yu. Zagirnyak (Zagirnyak, 2021), etc. are devoted to the study of various aspects of the philosophical and pedagogical heritage of Sergius I. Hessen.

Pedagogical practices of using the concept of “free will” education, the theory of cultural and historical work in educational institutions are presented by empirical studies of European scientists such as R. Barrow and R. Woods (Barrow et al., 2021), J. Pintassigo and de A.N. Andrade (Pintassilgo et al., 2020), M.B. Postholm and K.F. Vennebo (Postholm et al., 2021), J.B. Rius (Rius, 2017).

2. Materials and methods

The sociocultural approach in understanding the phenomenon of “free will” education in the pedagogy of culture is the fundamental one, since it allows considering Hessen’s conception of social education, its evolution, theoretical and practical significance in the most complete, holistic and system way in the conditions of multicultural modern world.

The main source of the research data are the scientific works of Sergius I. Hessen written in the first half of the 20th century. The studies of the philosophical and pedagogical heritage of Sergius I. Hessen conducted by Russian and foreign scholars made it possible to form a theoretical basis for the study, to structure and generalize the material obtained. The retrospective and possibilities of using the pedagogy of culture are considered applying interdisciplinary approach in terms of philosophy, pedagogy, cultural studies and Russian history.

In each era, the pedagogical picture of the world has a different social and cultural content, including a value one. Therefore, the use of narrative (biographical) and general scientific research methods such as historicism, data systematization, comparison, collation, and generalization made it possible to characterize the scientific concepts of Sergius I. Hessen in the context of determining their scientific and practical significance.

3. Discussion

The beginning of the 20th century was marked by the search for new models and methods of upbringing and education of the younger generation carried out by the scientific community. Unique cadet education institutions were created in Russia; they have proved their worth over the years (Abramov, 2014). The pedagogy of culture is evidenced in the K. N. Venttsel’s works devoted to the methodology of collaboration (Abramov, 2021), in S. T. Shatsky’s conception of educating the individuality of a student (Chuikov et al., 2018). Educational systems of V. N. Soroki-Rosinsky laid a new direction in the creation of pedagogical doctrines of conscious individual creativity (Abramov et al., 2019).

Addressing the pedagogical heritage of European scientists, including those from the Russian educators' émigré community, expands the boundaries of modern pedagogical innovations and determines the direction of sociocultural cooperation (Bordovsky et al, 2018).

In this process, a significant role was played by the Russian pedagogical émigré community. A large number of Russian children and outstanding scientists were in exile. As it is rightly pointed out by E. E. Sedova, these two main factors influenced the formation of educational conceptions and specific pedagogical practices of the Russian émigré community (Sedova, 2019). In the 20-30s of the 20th century, Russian émigré educators created a unique philosophical and pedagogical conception of education, which was based on the ideas of Sergius I. Hessen.

Hessen's works became the basis for organizing the system of education built by Russian educators' émigré community in Europe. It is no coincidence that among the Russian scientific émigré community Hessen's work on the basics of pedagogy was recognized as an "outstanding" pedagogical book of the 20th century (Zenkovsky, 2001).

According to O.A. Yanutsh, the relevance of Hessen's ideas for Cultural studies of education lies in the fact that at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries he characterized the positive and negative aspects of multicultural (global) education (Yanutsh, 2018).

T.P. Razbeglova interpreted Hessen's philosophical and educational theory as the beginning of the formation of the anthropocentric educational paradigm in Europe in the first half of the 20th century (Razbeglova, 2019).

The origins of the cultural creativity of Sergius I. Hessen were revealed by I.N. Popova, who focuses her attention on the activity of an individual and the unity of the "pedagogy – culture – education" triad. Paying attention to Hessen's distinctions, the author notes his message that it is cultural activity that becomes the main condition for the development of human society (Popova, 2017).

The results of Sergius I. Hessen's research formed the basis for the definition of the culture of education as a single social space and the process of building an individual world of culture for an individual given by modern Russian scientists. In such a world, tolerance becomes a defining value guideline, which overrides violence and arbitrariness in civil society (Chupakhin et al., 2016).

The followers of Hessen's ideas confirm that the goals of education and the goals of culture are identical. The objective of modern education is to transform a natural human being into a cultural one (Beisenov et al., 2015).

A.V. Mudrik defines Hessen's conception of social education as a typical middle-level theory, the originality of which lies in its free essence (Mudrik, 2011). According to the researcher, the fundamental concept of this theory is the community in which the whole range of formal and informal sociocultural interactions is formed (Mudrik, 2018).

In his studies, M.Yu. Zagirnyak analyzes the concepts of an individual and the society and their interaction in Hessen's socio-philosophical theory. It is shown how the axiology of neo-Kantianism influenced the interpretation of the system of social relations and the understanding of the free will of an individual as a social subject. Social reality as a culture created in the process of communicative activity of individuals allows us to consider sociability as a system-forming concept in the neo-Kantian conceptions of the Russian émigré community. An individual is a particular human being who has his own will and can interact with others, while a personality is an individual who realizes him/herself in creativity, participates in the embodiment of a value in reality (Zagirnyak, 2021).

N. A. Lurya substantiates Hessen's idea that the ratio of freedom and the type of coercion in the system of education is a reflection of the changing values of culture and significantly depends on how these values penetrate the education system (Lurya, 2017).

Hessen's conceptual provisions on the freedom of the individual are reconstructed in the legal field by M.V. Vorobiev and presented as a system of "personality – culture – general will – law – state" (Vorobiev, 2017).

Ya.D. Gushchin disclosed the category of "freedom" in Hessen's interpretation from the philosophical viewpoint. Freedom in human existence acts as a way to determine good and evil in daily cultural practices (Gushchin, 2021).

L.E. Shaposhnikov gives his assessment of Hessen's attempt to synthesize philosophy and pedagogy. The author criticizes the categorical nature of the thesis on the close relations of some parts of Philosophy and Pedagogy. The issues concerning the relationship between freedom and

coercion in the educational sphere in Hessen's interpretation are presented in interconnection with creativity and "the development of individuality in a personality" (Shaposhnikov, 2016).

According to Sergius I. Hessen, despite the complexity of their conceptualizing the goals of education and upbringing should be considered in close interrelation with cultural objectives of the particular society to which these teacher and student belong. The main goal of the system of education is to perceive, re-analyze and implement these objectives (Yakovenko, 2015).

The model of solidarity created by Sergius I. Hessen can be considered as a reference, self-valuable model for studying modern local cultures. As it is quite rightly remarked by M.Yu. Zagirnyak, such a model of interpreting culture through the correspondence of a system of institutions to the level of freedom of a certain society makes it possible to evaluate the cultural practices of different eras (Zagirnyak, 2019).

The ideas of "free will" education, taking into account national peculiarities, are still debatable for European researchers. Thus, the ideas of cooperation, co-creation, competitiveness and freedom, which are largely compliant with the Hessen's conception, were subjected to historical and pedagogical interpretation in 1922–1938 in Spain (Rius, 2017). The studies of R. Barrow and R. Woods from the UK are also noteworthy; when studying the system of education, they use such categories as culture, creativity, autonomy, and open learning (Barrow et al., 2021). M.V. Postholm and K.F. Vennebo, their colleagues, insist on using the ideas of a single cultural and educational space for the joint constructing and solving real pedagogical issues (Postholm et al., 2021).

Portuguese scholars focus on the need for pedagogical renewal of the educational environment based on the principles of freedom and cooperation of teachers and students (Pintassilgo et al. 2020).

As we can see, Hessen's conception of the pedagogy of culture still continues to draw attention of many scientists from all over the world.

4. Results

Intensive scientific and pedagogical activity of Sergius I. Hessen prevailed in the period of emigration. In different years, working in Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, the scientist participated in many international forums on the issues of pedagogy of culture and education of the younger generation, held in many capitals of European countries such as Berlin, Warsaw, Vienna, London, Paris, and Prague. Thanks to Sergius I. Hessen, the values of the "Russian world", based on the postulates of Goodness, Truth, Freedom and Justice, became the property of the education systems of many European countries. The scientific works of the Russian emigrant were published in many languages and served as the basis for the creation of national systems of education.

According to Sergius I. Hessen, an individual and culture, represent a single social continuum in which culture is reproduced by a society consisting of many individuals, its members. In turn, each individual, constantly entering into sociocultural relationships, makes his/her own possible contribution to the cultural change of the whole society, provided that he/she is able to understand what needs to be changed in it.

The formation of the human personality occurs under the influence of the culture of a particular society. According to Sergius I. Hessen, upbringing and education of such a personality, capable of changing the world of culture, constitute an inseparable dyad.

Individual's freedom, according to Sergius I. Hessen, is affirmed as the main factor of cultural continuum. The researcher comes to the conclusion that "Freedom is creation of the new, which has not existed in the world before. I am free when I resolve some difficult life task that has arisen before me in my own way, in a way that no one else could solve it. And the more irreplaceable, individual my action is, the freer it is" (Hessen, 1995). In cultural continuity, the most important role is played by the individual as a free creature. Sergius I. Hessen uses the concept of "individual" to characterize a personality as a participant in social practices (Hessen, 1999).

Moral laws, principles of reason, independence, self-education and self-discipline form a free person; following them not only organizes human life, but also forces persons to organize their sociocultural interactions in the space of freedom, organize their thinking and mind in the legal field.

It is the person who, on the one hand, is capable of self-discipline and, on the other, can concentrate his/her will without any form of coercion on the part of society, can be recognized as a free moral person. Otherwise, we will get an immoral, selfish personality. Such a pedagogical conception is based on the principles of moral education and upbringing (Hessen, 2010).

According to Sergius I. Hessen, moral education should not perform the task of preparing for a specific profession; to create a thinking person is the main objective in this process. It is freedom which is far from mechanical, artificial culture that is presented as the main means of survival of such persons.

Turning to J.-J. Rousseau's works, Hessen agrees with the educator, noting that it is nature that should become the best educator of an individual. At the same time, the teacher needs to protect culture and individuals in every possible way (Rousseau, 1989).

Hessen's philosophical and pedagogical conception was formed as a result of an axiological approach to the analysis of the ideas of freedom of the French enlighteners such as J.-J. Rousseau and D. Diderot; I. Kant, the founder of German classical philosophy, and his opponent G. Rickert; P.P. Blonsky, the representative of the "human" education, and L.N. Tolstoy's moral freedom of a person. Hessen's methodology wove together the past, present and future, ensured the interconnection and continuity of unique educational models of different times and peoples. (Hessen, 1995).

Taking the position of J.-J. Rousseau, who argued that a free and whole person is the main content of that ideal of "nature", which is opposed to any culture in general, Sergius I. Hessen specifies the tasks of education and upbringing:

- cultural socialization aimed at accepting the values of the society to which an individual belongs;

- the formation of a cultural person from a natural individual.

Culture, like the entire education system, according to Sergius I. Hessen, can be subdivided into several types. In accordance with this division, the general conception of education and upbringing can be divided into theories of scientific, moral, aesthetic, technical, artistic and religious education. The main thesis of the educator is that it is possible to educate and bring up only where there is culture. There should be exactly as many cultural values as there are types of education. Moreover, the goals of culture must be linked with the goals of education and upbringing (Hessen, 1995).

Free actions differ from arbitrary ones. The actions of a free person are necessarily accompanied by some restrictions: internal laws, cultural patterns, self-discipline. If there are no such restrictions in the structure of a person, we will get arbitrariness in his/her actions. According to Sergius I. Hessen, coercion should be put into educational practices only when it is necessary. It is important to make sure that such coercion is ultimately accepted by the trainee as his/her own choice. Freedom and discipline are in close relationship and become the main pedagogical discourse in practical school activities. Therefore, coercion is defined by Sergius I. Hessen as an important attribute of training and education, of "critical didactics".

According to Sergius I. Hessen, the main pedagogical goal is the formation of the inner 'core' in the structure of the trainee's personality with the help of which he/she will gain freedom and the ability to be creative. External socio-cultural barriers and restrictions should not be removed artificially.

In his viewpoint, school discipline is the necessary form of coercion. At the same time, it should not constrain the independence of students, their initiative within certain limits, which are established by the teacher (Ivanov, 2020).

Education and upbringing are represented as a multilevel, contradictory and hierarchical process by Sergius I. Hessen. Each level involves clearly defined goals, objectives and ways of implementing pedagogical practices:

- a psychophysiological level, at which students will be helped to form their own "self", which will allow them to solve complex socio-cultural and other life tasks;

- a social level which presupposes developing (forming) a personality of a student as a representative of a specific social group, a carrier and an active conductor of the values and norms of the society to which he/she belongs;

- a cultural level, which determines the general direction of the educational model for the reproduction of a free creative person capable of creating new cultural patterns;

- a spiritual level involves training and education aimed at consolidating the individuals' abilities for self-development, self-education and spiritual growth.

Coercible (forced) educational practices are used at the first and second levels. The subsequent ones open the way of free creativity for a person and his/her transmission to the external socio-cultural world (Deryuga, 2017).

According to Hessen, freedom, equality, creativity and the integrity of an individual are the basic principles of the “new school”. Persons learn during all their lives. Similar to socialization, which continues throughout the conscious life of an individual, the process of education is endless. “Only an uneducated person can claim that he has completely solved the educational problem for himself” (Hessen, 1995).

Hessen’s analytical works on the activities of J. Gentile (Hessen, 1952), J. Dewey (Hessen, 1953), G. Lobardo-Radice and J. Kershensteiner (Hessen, 1954), scientific essay on “Pedagogy and the World of Economics” (Hessen, 1954) determined the course of school reform in Italy. In Poland, theorists and practitioners of problem-based learning still apply the conception of “critical didactics” and educational methods of the Russian educator.

The words of the scientist, which reflect the socio-cultural reality of the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, sound truly prophetic: “The era of crisis, the disintegration of the personality, individual’s freedom and morals is coming. A personality who has not kept up with the rapid pace of external culture in his/her internal development is lost in the mass of new impressions that immediately surrounded him/her. The centrifugal forces of external cultural contents overcome the centripetal forces of the personality, and the personality is, as it were, torn apart, broken under the burden of the mechanisms generated by the personality. There comes the domination of the form over the spirit, the letter over the content, the mechanism over freedom. The individual loses him/herself, begins to think with other people’s thoughts, feel with other people’s feelings, act as someone else. The original personality gives way to those soulless automatons who, in Rousseau’s rhetoric, do not dare to “be themselves” and whose wisdom boils down to the rule “one must act like others”. Outwardly, this disintegration of the personality is manifested in the loss of his/her stability in relation to the temptations of the environment and the decay of morals associated with this. The disintegration of the personality is finally followed by the decline of cultural creativity in general, i.e., the disintegration of the external culture itself, which expands extremely outside, but dries up in its own depths. This is how the features characteristic of any “enlightenment” arise: the replacement of science with scholasticism, of art with academic aestheticism, in which an encyclopedist dominates instead of a researcher, and an art critic dominates instead of an artist” (Hessen, 1995).

Sergius I. Hessen tried to remedy this situation by proposing his philosophical doctrine, which accumulated the pedagogical experience of the age of Enlightenment, Soviet practices of upbringing and education, and European scientific schools. As a result, a single cultural pedagogical matrix ‘crystallized’, and the works of the researcher were recognized the best books of the 20th century. Hessen’s conceptions united the most important challenges of all levels of education. A special place in the doctrine of “free will” education is given to the theory of the university. Sergius I. Hessen saw the ideal model of the university as an educational institution, the center of science, as a ‘reservoir’ that absorbs small ‘separate streams’, which make up “a stream of scientific legend, pouring out in new streams and eventually turning into an eternally seething flow” (Hessen, 1995).

Therefore, the cultural ‘bridge’ between Europe and Russia, laid from the past to the present by Sergius I. Hessen, can become a prototype of the future for the scientists all over the world.

5. Conclusion

Pedagogy of culture, specified by Sergius I. Hessen in the concept of “free will” education, found its practical implementation in the creation of a single unique cultural and educational space, had a real impact on the development of educational policy in many European countries. Hessen’s philosophical and pedagogical heritage turned into reality from a projection into the future, being reflected in the Bologna process, which brought together and harmonized the systems of higher education in Russia and Europe. New generations will have to renew the world with the discovery of new cultural achievements. It is these discoveries that ensure intergenerational harmony and continuity of culture.

The study of the philosophical and pedagogical heritage of Sergius I. Hessen is determined by the logic of the development of the modern multicultural world, in which education both in Europe and around the world is focused on freedom, dialogue, openness and is designed to form:

- An educational space based on mutual understanding, recognition and respect for cultural diversity;
- The ability to carry on dialogues between different cultures while maintaining people’s cultural identity;
- Respect for a person, his/her rights and freedoms;

- A system of interstate educational exchange, which is designed to ensure social well-being and political stability throughout the world;
- Concern for the preservation of ecological European and world balance;
- The desire to preserve peace.

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