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**THE INTELLECTUAL EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IN BULGARIA IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

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**Abstract.** The following publication is based on a research project in support of doctoral students whose topic is: Education in children organisations in Bulgaria (1944-1990) presented through sources”, funded by the state budget of the University of Sofia “St. Clement of Ohrid” and functioning as scientific research.

This research is historical, pedagogical and scientific and it aims to reconstruct the basic trends in the development of children’s intellectual education in Bulgaria in the second half of XX century by means of historical sources. Its chronology spans half a century and includes one entire period of Bulgaria’s latest history. The key motive of the research is the absence of a new non-ideologised and objective scrutiny of the educational development of children within this period, including intellectual education as one of its types. This is only possible if based on a comprehensive source-centered research which is the actual sort of this project that has systematised sources from the Central State Archive, the Scientific Archive of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the Bulgarian Historical Archive of the "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" National Library and the periodical press.

Retrospectively, the publication presents the essential specifics, the content and the manifestation forms of intellectual education of children within the period of state democracy (1944-1947); the imposing of totalitarianism and its development, called “Todor Zhivkov’s power (zhivkovism in Bulgarian); the first decade of post-totalitarian development of Bulgaria, also known as Democratic transition. Considering the specific social situation in the country and the form of power, we put highlight on the organised school and extra-curricular intellectual education. The extracted positive practices and methods of intellectual education, existing in various extra-curricular forms, are a valuable historical capital for contemporary structures for informal education of children.

The conclusions in this aspect are logically drawn from a historical view of the relation between the social situation in Bulgaria and the organised education of children – school or extra-curricular education, as well as from historically grounded place, role and importance of intellectual education prior to other kinds of education - patriotic, international, aesthetic, moral, physical and labour education.

The definition of „child“ is explained by a normative order existed back then in the researched period.

**Keywords:** intellectual education, child, second half of XX century, Bulgaria

**1. INTRODUCTION**

The aims and the methods of this research and the source base are interrelated. The distinguishing of the intellectual education development trends of children during the various half-a-century-long period is primarily based on documentary, archivist’s, analytic-synthetic method, on hermeneutic analysis, theoretical reconstruction and problematic-historical approach. The source base of the research includes data, facts and information about events, processes related to intellectual education of children being part from the Central State Archive, the State Gazette and the periodical press from the second half of XX century.

The problem of the intellectual education of children in Bulgaria in the second half of the twentieth century has been poorly explored in the scientific literature published after 1989. Some of its aspects have been raised in the studies of Penka Tsoneva, and similar points in the works of I. Elenkov, N. Christova and other (Tsoneva, 2018, 293-332; Tsoneva, 2018, 130-137, 205-207; Tsoneva, 2017, 3-7; Elenkov, 2018, 73-78; Hristova, 2014, p. 31, p. 132; Elenkov, 2010, 58-65).

The used category apparatus includes a number of fundamental concepts such as „child“. According to the existing normative order during the researched period, every physical person aged up to 18 years takes part in this category. The age of 18 years is defined as full age under Article 2 of the Law on People and family dating back to 1949 and under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the Great National Assembly in 1991 (Law, 1949, article 2; Convention, 1991).

**2. SOCIAL SITUATION IN BULGARIA AND ORGANISED EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN**

Before the huge social, political and economic change happened on 09 September, 1944, children in the Kingdom (Tsardom) of Bulgaria took part in a variety of children’s and teenager’s organisations in many spheres: political (in

separate political parties and movements), social, charity organisations, cultural,religious etc. all of which were extraordinarily rich in educational methods and practices.

**During the years of national democracy (1944-1947).** On 09 September,1944 the power is taken by a government of the Bulgarian Fatherland Front led by Kimon Georgiev, in which representatives of four political parties and independent intellectuals unite in the name of a programme aiming to implement radical reforms in all social spheres. Among them is the new approach towards children's education structures that does not envisage their distinction on political base. All children's organisations unite in one single organization called „Septemvriiche“, led by the National Youth Union (1947).

Local committees of the Fatherland Front sponsor and support the union of children's organisations in one single organisations according to regulations of Memorandum No 21/18.05.1945 of the National committee of the Fatherland Front (Memorandum, 1945, 14-15). They provide rooms for children's clubs, inventory, sports playgrounds and organize trips and camps. 164 camps with 123 240 children were organized as over 90 % of the money was collected by the regional organisations of the Fatherland Front and several cooperations (Report, 1947). The goal of this united children's organisation that is built regionally, is the national, democratic, anti-fascist and patriotic education of more than 400 000 children and teenagers.

**Under the conditions of totalitarianism (1948-1953) and the resulted liberalization (1953-1968)** of all social spheres, there was a trend related to a mass engagement of children aged from 7 to 9 years in the organization „Chavdarche“ and children aged from 9 to 14 years in the organization „Septemvriiche“, later renamed in 1951 as Dimitrov's pioneer organization „Septemvriiche“ (DPO). Its members number 700 000 in 1967 and 1 million „chavdarches“ and „pioneers“ grouped in 3 800 groups and 23 000 sub-groups. In 1946 their number grows up by 6 % and in 1969 – by 12 % (Stoyanov, 1976, page 53).

In the stage of the so called „zhivkovism“, started in 1962 and continued until 1989, new trends are set. They are directly related to the following liberalization wave of social life. They are well expressed in the 70s and 80s of XX century. Among them is the complete engagement of children in both organisations „Chavdarche“ and „Septemvriiche“. Their aim is to enhance their individual thinking and widening their educational horizons. 5-6 generations passed through these organisations. Expressed in numbers, that would mean 5-6 million Bulgarians, i.e. all citizens aged between 6 and 50-60 get or have gotten their first lessons on citizenship in the children's organisations (Central State Archive, archive unit 34, sheet 4). Two medals symbolized this acknowledgement – „Georgi Dimitrov“ and „National Republic of Bulgaria-first class“ (23.09.1959). The grounds of the future radical reforms are set under conditions of the Bulgarian „reorganization „ (1985-1989), lasted about 4 years.

The „Reorganisation“ is the bridge to the democratic transition which started **in the last decade of XX century** and continues until nowadays. The post-totalitarian development of Bulgaria in the last ten decades of the second millennial is influenced by radical changes: transition from one-party to multi-party political system, from centrally planned and controlled by state economy to market economy; building of a system for social and health protection based on fund principle, changes of educational,cultural and other systems in terms of structure, organization and contents.

The organisation consisting of „Chavdarche“ and „Pionerche“ that existed more than 46 years as well as its enormous administrative system are removed. Its strong ideological approach and its regional and educational principle engaging all children become incompatible with the aims and the contents of children's education in the Republic of Bulgaria (Law, 1991, § 10, t. 1-4). After the National meeting in April 1990 in the city of Smolyan and the decision to remove DPO „Septemvriiche“, pioneer clubs transform into Municipal centres for children, renamed in the mid 90s of XX century. United children's complexes become Centres for personal development support as of 2016.

If the groups (children aged between 5 -18 years) in children's complexes, funded by the municipal budget, have the scope of activity to fulfill the state policy by developing the children's skills in the spheres of science, technology, tourism and sport, so the Centres for personal development widen this scope according to regulations of article 49 from the Pre-school and school education law. The latter has the aim to develop their interests, abilities and skills in the spheres of science, technology, art and sport as well as the career consulting, the special education support, students' hostels, astronomical observatories and planetariums. (Law, 2015 paragraph 1-4). The newly created structures after 1990 also accentuate on educational function, lacking ideologemes catering for the interests of a certain political party.

### 3. INTELLECTUAL EDUCATION AS A PRIORITY TO OTHER TYPES OF EDUCATION

The high extent of functionality of education in and out of school is focused on developing intellectual habits and skills as well as sustainable knowledge, building mindset which will help children's personal development. This is

based on the ideology of the ruling party. The ideological highlight of children's education is a trait of its variety – intellectual, patriotic, international, aesthetic, moral, physical and labour approach. Subjects of this massive pedagogical influence are the teachers who take part simultaneously in school and extra-curricular activities helping children and teenagers, group leaders of pioneers' organisation at school whose work develops professionally since 1948 etc.

Intellectual education has an important place in the education paradigm, ratified in documents and decisions of the ruling party and its youth organisation; in both constitutions and educational laws, in the joint ordinances of the government and the social organisations (Constitution, 1947; Constitution, 1971, Law, 1948; Law 1959). Despite the fact that the notion „intellectual education of children“ is not included in the normative order of the Republic of Bulgaria for a very long time, immediately after 1944 follows purposful development of intellectual skills, habits and abilities of children. The Constitution in 1971 includes the intellectual education as a priority followed by moral, aesthetic, cultural, physical and labour education of youth. As key education factors are defined: family, school, state organs, children's and social organisations (Constitution, 1971, article 39, paragraph 2).

#### 4. FOCUS ON CONTENTS AND FORMS OF INTELLECTUAL EDUCATION

**Education in sustainable knowledge by means of school and extra-curricular forms** - a top priority of the school and the children's organisation. Members of „Septemvriiche“ need to be the best in class. The innovative forms are the groups who help less good students, organise extra-curricular activities such as clubs in literature, history, geography, science, technology, aircraft modelling, household as well as choirs for Bulgarian folklore songs, fairytales, riddles, fables and proverbs. Data show that members of „Septemvriiche“ achieve good to very good results and good for the non-members so during the first school term of 1946/ 1947 the groups are 10 304 managing to help 96 846 students. As a result from their activity 106 697 members of „Septemvriiche“ take part in 5871 clubs, total of 1990 notebooks and works of literature and science are collected and prepared for school purposes. „There are 1203 herbaria and collections as well as 7169 field trips are organised.“ (Report, 1947, 6-7, p. 13).

**Nurturing love of book.** A publishing house named "Detizdat" created in 1946/ 1947 has a number of successful publications all focused on cultivating the love of reading: weekly „Septemvriiche“ newspaper (circulation 200 000), „Septemvriiche“ fortnightly newspaper in Turkish (10 000), monthly „Plamache“ magazine (20 000), monthly „Chavdarche“ magazine (30 000), „Septemvriiche“ library with Bulgarian and foreign children's books, „Septemvriiche“ bookshop etc all aiming to enhance the interest of children in terms of widening and enriching their technical and scientific knowledge. A child needs to become a reader of wide scope (Report, 1947, 6-7, p. 13).

The love for books and reading is cultivated from early age by means of innovative forms – the Children's book club (1953) located at 13 „Slavyanska“ Str. in Sofia, later renamed as Home of literature and art for children and teenagers; the permanently organised since 1955 Week of the children's book, the 832 libraries created in 1952 (Central State Archive, archive unit 35, sheet 235). The libraries and reading corners with newspapers, magazines and books whose net develops further until 1990, are great places for discussing works of literature and organising reading events. Those extra-curricular forms combined with books, scholarly essays, reports and mural printing develop children's curiosity and research passion.

The trend to reading enhancing methods aims to make children grow up as intellectual, versatile and harmonious individuals since their start at school and, respectively, the children's organisations „Chavdarche“ and DPO „Septemvriiche“ – typical for the researched period (Law, 1959, paragraph 1). One specific manifest of this trend is that the ideological focus on reading and discussions is gradually increasing except for the years of the national democracy and transition. This is related to the ideological and political education of children (Central State Archive, archive unit 35, sheet 235).

**Nurturing love of science and technical progress.** Both presented directions of intellectual education are tightly related to the next one functioning as premises for participation of children in the sphere of science and technology. This work develops further in clubs in the school terrain or in material bases consisting of scientific institutes, production companies and managed by teachers, group leaders or specialists in the particular area. The activity of ecological clubs such as „Green patrols“ is an unseparated part of the plans of clubs managed by the Technical and scientific work of children. The structures are permanent at school and temporary at summer camps in students' brigades and they combine love of nature and its protection (Statute-book, 1979).

A distinguishing trend is that more and more children are engaged in club activity and its structure changed. If clubs of young technicians, agrobiologists, aircraft-modellers etc were popular in the 60s, until the end of the decade more and more children became interested in clubs for radio, electronics, robots and automatisation. In the late 70s, the clubs related to professional orienteering were more preferred by children in the sphere of material production. In the

first half of the 80s, there was a new moment of change in the club activity structure. Corners for funny technical games and construction, botany and zoology, scientific expeditions were created. „Thus, by means of emotional influence, children are stimulated to show steady interest to nature, technology and labour.“ The primary technical education in the process of constructive technical activity aims at „development of intellect, imagination and art from the early age“ (CSA, a.u. 230, s. 68). At the same time, the club activity becomes a compound part of the educational process and the theme of the extra-curricular activities is complied with the social and economic specifics of the region which inevitably changes the criteria to the leaders – successful specialists, scientists, leaders and holders of medals. The intellectual education develops organisational, skills, self-discipline, love of the chosen profession, responsibility and accuracy (CSA, a.u. 230, s. 66, s. 68-69). That is namely the mere contribution of the Youth technical and scientific work – nurturing interest and love of science, technology; creative thinking and approach.

The assessment of their result takes place not only in the clubs but also in the separate regional youth clubs and pioneer clubs. „On a certain day of every month, members of the youth intelligence dispose of a room in the regional club. There they meet with the children, discuss art, assess their work. Children come without any preliminary organisation because those meetings are free and the fixed days of the months are a great reference point.“ (CSA, a.u. 19, s. 97). This assessment approach not only improves the professional performance of children but also stimulates their work and broadens their social contacts.

The trend transforms into mass youth movement for technical and scientific work which includes more than 1 million children and teenagers in 1968 who are 12% of Bulgarian population (CSA, a.u. 1014, s. 3, 12, 21, 76). The share of children aged 7 to 14 who are members of certain clubs, increases from 6,3 % in 1968/ 1969 to 18,8 % in 1969/ 1970 and from 27,4 % in 1970/ 1971 to 29,6 % in 1971/ 1972. This dynamics gives the National conference (1986) reasons to construct the movement into a massive and organised form of professional orientation, for gaining knowledge in the field of technics, natural laws and phenomena, completing the skills taught at school.

At the same time, the conference puts highlight on the scope of the youngest students - the „chavdarcheta“ and on the specifics of their appearance in the national reviews of the Youth technical and scientific work, in the contests „I know and I can“, in the town contests in the field of applied technics and regional fests (CSA, a.u. 34, s. 73-74). Two years later, the organisation gets a new vision on the concept of children participation – „chavdarche“ and „pionerche“. The vision is related to the transformation of clubs into self-regulating communities tightly connected to the labour team (CSA, a.u. 381, s. 41-44). This process evolves at the background of the continuity of the educational activity of the youth club and the flourishing polytechnic and wide-scope preparation of students.

Under the conditions of democratic transition the Municipal centres for work with children, transformed in the mid 90s of XX century into Municipal children's complexes, continue developing students' interests in the field of science, technology, career orientation and consulting.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The following specific trends in the development of intellectual education of children during the separate stages of the researched period are not only of historical pedagogical value but also it has grounds for rethinking of contemporary reality through the prism of the rich historical experience. The directions of intellectual education and its forms, lacking ideologemes of the totalitarian times, carry the timeless significance of nurturing organisational skills, self-discipline and self-control, responsibility in the choice of profession, love of book, science and technology.

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