Activities of Religious Organizations in Preschool Field of Ukraine (during 2nd half of 19th century – 1920s)

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Abstract

The article considers the contribution of Orthodox organizations and institutions to the functioning of Ukrainian preschool system during 2nd half of 19th century – 1920s. The analysis of the archival and source base denoted that the activities of the church-parish and monastery asylums, religious-educational fraternities, parish guardianships and private initiative of the clergy has subverted the formation of this branch at the social level. The author of the research defines and characterizes the main tendencies of their organizational and regulatory work with children of 3-6 years old (guardianship, educational activities, education). The attention is focused on the general characterizing of the basic ideas that were directly implemented in the practice of preschool education: the task of moral, religious, labour and physical education of children, the formation of their basic erudition and value orientation. The education of parents is also included in the activity spectrum of the religious institutions during the studied period.

The presented material contributes to the deepening of scientific knowledge on the history of preschool education in Ukraine.

Key words: asylum, nursery, kindergarten, religious organization, guardianship, education, religious and moral education.

There was a branched system of public societies and institutions in the 2nd half of 19th century in Ukraine that realized the educational activities for the preschoolers. The religious organizations joined them actively during the same period.

The analysis of their reporting documentation [5; 8; 9; 10; 12; 13; 14] denoted that the church and public societies opened the children's institutions, organized leisure, conducted the educational measures and participated in the substantiation of theoretical and practical principles in formation of the preschoolers and the training of the pedagogical staff.

Thus, they established the church-parish asylums at the monasteries for the purpose of basic literacy formation and children guardianship. At the same time the tasks of religious and moral education, the formation of patriotic feelings and work skills were solved and the ecological upbringing of children was encouraged.

The excursions and readings introduced in the asylums since the 2nd half of 19th century contributed to the spiritual development of the pupils. The themes of the last ones were correlated depending on the calendar holidays and anniversary events. Such readings helped to deepen the philosophical and ideological knowledge of children, their emotional and value sphere.

The Orthodox books, music and art were used as the means of moral and aesthetic education and the formation of the preschoolers' relationships with the world around them on the basis of the Christian values. The confirmation of this opinion may be found in the statements of the priest Roznatovskyi K. on the necessity to involve the children in the festive activities for "an inception of pure sense of social relations and pleasures; ... love for the native land; ... development of a religious and moral sense" [11, p. 94].

The pedagogical emphasis of the church-parish asylums shifted slightly in the early 20th century. The direction of individual physical health improving was characterized more clearly. In particular, the report of the Kharkiv religious-educational eparchial fraternity of the Ozeryanska Icon of the Mother of God for 1911 mentions the sports and "air" gaming activity of the pupils "and the recreation at ... the resorts" [9, p. 20]. During the researching period the asylum took care of 20 girls from 4 to 11 years old. The similar measures were taken by the St. Michael Fraternity, Prince of Chernihiv, Peter and Paul Fraternity, Cyril and Methodius Fraternity of the Volyn Diocese [5; 10; 12].

It was the gender approach that has been considered by many clergymen as the fundamental one in the activities of the children's institutions. In particular, it was implemented in the practice of "House of Diligence" boys' centre (Chernihiv, 1892); "Christian Commonwealth" boys' association (Voronezh, 1908). Aiming to get acquainted with the Christian virtues its founders at the same time strived for the forming of morality and diligence, healthy lifestyle and basic literacy [14, p. 423].

The children guardianship institutions were also established in churches. According to the researchers the educational work was conducted "randomly and unsystematically" [6, p. 91] in such institutions but they accelerated the involving of children into society, expanded their knowledge of moral norms and rules of life.

The activity of the clergy contributed to the expansion of the church-parish asylums network and the provision of their pedagogical staff. In particular, according to Brychok S. the periodical "Parish School" contains the description of a teacher's simulated image and the list of main requirements includes the theoretical knowledge (knowledge of subject) and personal qualities (love of children, tact and persistence). The religiosity was considered as one of the most necessary possessions of teacher [2, p. 50].

The Orthodox societies also opened the special institutions for preschoolers in Ukraine (nurseries) simultaneously with the asylums in the late 19th century. A day-time institution in Kharkiv with the similar name was established one of the first in 1899 which was cared for by the Savior-Transfiguration Parish [8, p. 74]. According to the researchers Guzhva O. and Kravchenko O. their network grew significantly in the early 20th century – the first decade of 20th century. Most of them functioned with the charitable assistance of parishes, churches, fraternities or with them.

The range of religious institutions activities during the researching period has significantly expanded due to the leisure activities with children. To this purpose the seasonal nurseries were opened [16]. The fraternity members not only took care of the children's lives during their parents' employment but also solved the issues of the healthy lifestyle, formation of basic work skills and aesthetic manners. One of the positive aspects of the summer nurseries opening is that some of them were transformed into the permanent ones later. This process was characteristic for Kharkiv, Poltava, Katerynoslav, Podilsk, Kherson and Chernihiv provinces in the early 20th century [16].

The similar powers were placed on the parish guardianships which, like the fraternities, were not considered purely as the ecclesiastical organizations but served as the public charities in the churches and their number has been increasing every year since its appearance in the middle of the 19th century. In the early 20th century the largest number of the parish guardianships in Ukraine operated in Chernihiv and Podilsk provinces [1, p. 92]. The existence and arrangement of nurseries during the First World War depended on their activity. In particular, in 1915 the institutions for the youngest pupils existed at almost all church schools in Hlukhiv district, in general, the diocese numbered about 51 of them [5, p. 77].

During 1914-1918 the centres for orphans including preschoolers were opened by “The Savior's Heart House” (Kyiv), the society of parishioners of the Holy Cross Exaltation Church (Kyiv, 1914). In 1915, the Diocesan Fraternity of St. Prince Michael in Chernihiv created the agricultural asylums for the soldiers' children. The Poltava Society of children guardianship had been responsible for the visitors of the asylum for the youngest since 1916. With the help of the charitable associations the similar institutions were opened in Zhytomyr, Sevastopol, Kharkiv and Cherkasy.

As the analysis of the archival materials denoted the parish committees of the churches and religious fraternities in the early 20th century took part in the organization of kindergartens. For example, in 1907 the kindergarten was founded by the Kyiv Borisoglebsk Fraternity [3], in 1915 – the St. Michael Fraternity, Prince of Chernihiv [12]. The Barbara-Michael religious-moral-educational and charitable society (Kyiv, 1912) [13], the Volodymyr-Volyn charitable society dealt with the issues of preschool education.

The problem of forms, methods and content of religious preschooler education was especially controversial. Thus, the Archpriests Vyshnevetskyi M. I. and Trotsky I. were involved in the discussion of the curriculum of the free kindergarten of “Kyiv Society of People's Kindergartens” in Shulyavka (Kyiv, 1910). They actualized the need to form the moral and ethical qualities of children by the means of religious awareness and, as a consequence, the ability to interact with the world on the basis of the universal Christian virtues.

The Orthodox fraternities also worked on the education of adults in the field of religious and moral education, parents in particular. To this purpose they organized the public reading rooms. The spiritual knowledge was propagated orally to the visitors of Sunday schools, village meetings and public auditoriums at the churches. The formation of the educational ideal of parents was stimulated by the literature of the book fund from the church and monastery libraries, bookstores and shops, mobile and stationary reading libraries and their studying denoted the possibility of introducing into the family practice the ideas of the child's spiritual development, moral ideals, the provisions of emotional and value attitude to the world.

Therefore, the Orthodox societies of Ukraine have been actively involved in working with preschoolers since the mid 19th century. The main trends of their activities include the guardianship and educational work, charity and education. The considerable attention was emphasized to the practical implementation of the tasks of moral and religious, labour and physical education of children, the formation of their basic literacy and values. At the same time the activities of church and public organizations contributed to the spiritual growth of parents, thereby, enriching the arsenal of family upbringing of the child.

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Translation of the Title, Abstract and References to the Author's Language

Лещенко Н. Діяльність релігійних організацій у галузі дошкілля України (II половина XIX – 20-х рр. XX ст.)

В статті розглядається внесок православних організацій та установ у функціонування дошкільної системи України II половини XIX – 20-рр. XX ст.. Аналіз архівної та джерелознавчої бази показав, що становленню означеної галузі на суспільному рівні сприяла діяльність церковнопарафіяльних та монастирських притулків, релігійно-просвітницьких братств, парафіяльних опікунств та приватної ініціативи духовенства. Автор дослідження визначає та характеризує основні напрями їх організаційно-нормативної роботи із дітьми 3-6 років (опікунство, освітня діяльність, просвітництво). Увага акцентується на окресленні основоположних ідей, що були безпосередньо впроваджені у практику дошкільного виховання: завдання морально-релігійного, трудового та фізичного виховання дітей, формування їх елементарної обізнаності та ціннісних орієнтацій. До спектру діяльності релігійних інституцій досліджуваного періоду відносилося і просвітництво батьків.

Представлений матеріал сприяє поглибленню наукового знання із історії дошкільного виховання в Україні.

Ключові слова: притулок, ясла, дитсадок, релігійна організація, опікунство, просвітництво, релігійно-моральне виховання.

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