

# *Formation of the Russian Deafblind Education System*

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**Abstract**—The paper is devoted to a research of the formation process of the Russian system of deafblind children education. The factors influencing the establishment and development of institutions for children with vision and hearing disorders are considered. The issues of practical use of I.A. Sokolyansky and A.I. Meshcheryakov system in the activity of institutions for deafblinds are considered. Results of clinical and psychological and pedagogical search of children with serious vision and hearing disorders are estimated. Importance of complex impact on development of residual vision, hearing, intelligence, the neuromuscular system of deafblind children is presented.

**Key words**—deafblindness; tactile sign pedagogy; education; development; physical needs

## I. INTRODUCTION

The history of the study of deaf-blindness begins with attempts to train and educate the individual blind, deaf and mute children. Attitude towards the deafblind people, as people completely incapable of learning, was changed by the teacher Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe. At that time, it was considered as fundamentally impossible to teach such children. In 1837, he began to train the deaf, blind and mute Laura Bridgman and then three more deafblind people. Hove developed his own method, thanks to which Laura Bridgeman learned to read and write as well as mastered working practices and household skills. The well-known psychologists G.S. Hall, V. Ieruzalem and others became interested in Laura's success.

In the process of teaching the deafblind people Hove first used the dactylography and the relief linear font (Boston font), proposed by him. For the training needs of blind and deaf, blind and mute people, Hove established book printing in the relief linear font according to the method of the French visual impairment specialist Valentin Gaiui. Later, after evaluating the advantages of Braille's relief-point system, he was supportive of it to get the opportunity of mastering not only reading, but also writing to the blind and deafblind people. The main thing in the technique of Samuel Greedy Hove is the introduction of the word-key, which plays the role of an "awakening" factor. Thanks to the base of this method, Laura Bridgeman realized

the function of denoting the word-key which Hove labeled as "the awakening of an immortal spirit."

A similar significant event occurred with the deafblind Helen Keller, whose teacher was Anna Sullivan, who was well aware of the training method of Laura Bridgman. The teacher began Helen's training with fingerspelling that is, pronouncing the words which denote familiar objects, in the girl's hand. The episode of "enlightenment" with Helen's conscious acquisition of the word "water" led her to the realization that everything around her has its own name, expressed in word. She began to read books printed in relief linear font, and write letters in a flat font. One of the main events of her life was the acquisition of reading and writing on Braille's system.

Scientists of that time could not substantiate the phenomenon of Helen Keller. The idea of it was fixed for decades as a miracle of the enlightenment of a person by the power of the divine Word. The human being was prescribed a spontaneous spiritual beginning, for which even insignificant external influences were sufficient, so that this "awakened" began and gained the freedom of "self-development". The pragmatist William James wrote, that the Genesis of Keller indicates the existence of God. Не принималась во внимание роль учительницы There was not taken into account the role of the teacher Anna Sullivan who established living verbal communication Helen Keller in the natural subject situation, which allowed forming the girl's speech communication.

In Russia, the first deafblind child was admitted to the Petersburg shelter for the mentally retarded in 1905, previously organized by Ekaterina Grachyova. A separate shelter for the deaf, blind and dumb people, which accepted seven children, was opened in 1910. By 1916 the number of deafblind people had reached 15. This group, after the revolution, entered the Petrograd Otophonic Institute, which became then the Institute of Hearing and Speech. The training of deafblind people was held in the same group as the deaf people. A separate educational group of the deafblind people received a training room and was staffed with teachers, began its work in 1934 and continued to operate until 1941.

In 1925, I.A. Sokolyansky laid the foundation for the work of the educational institution for deafblind people in Kharkov. The institution, in which eight students were trained, lasted until 1938.

In the 40s, A.V. Yarmolenko proposed the first classification of deafblind people. The basis for this classification was the time of the onset of the defect. Two categories of children were identified. The first, designated by the term deaf, blind and mute, united children deprived from birth of hearing and sight or lost them in the period before the acquisition and consolidation of verbal speech. The second category of children who had visual and hearing loss at preschool age or later was designated by the term deafblind. Children with a combination of deaf-blindness or deaf-mutism with blindness with mental retardation, A.V. Yarmolenko attributed to the third category.

For children who have lost hearing and seeing at different times, she suggested a typology where deafblind children were those with congenital or early hearing impairments and blindness occurred later. Children with early blindness and late deafness that occurred after the formation of speech were considered as deafblind.

A special institution for deafblind people, designed for 50 children, was opened in 1963 in Zagorsk on the initiative and active participation of the students of I.A. Sokolyansky. There were A.I. Meshcheryakov, R.A. Mareyeva and O. Skorohodova. In this unique educational institution there were accepted deaf, blind and mute people with a congenital or early loss of vision and hearing as well as deaf, blind and mute who did not have an objective vision and perceive speech by hearing. There could be trained deaf-mute children with various visual impairments which did not allow it to be used to read printed textbooks. There were accepted blind children with a decrease in hearing, which did not allow them to master speech. The main criterion in the admission of children was the learning ability.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The conclusion about the lack of the learning ability of a deafblind child should be done: a) when it will be established that during the year attempts to teach the child did not yield positive results; b) when, together with these specialists, it will be established that the lack of development of the child is based on mental retardation caused by organic brain damage (A.I. Meshcheryakov) [3]. In 1978, a group for mentally retarded deafblind children was organized at the Golovenkovsky boarding house for deafblind mentally retarded children. The experimental group of deafblind children continued their work at the Research Institute of Defectology of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the USSR, organized by A.I. Meshcheryakov in 1961. The number of pupils in it reached five. The training of more than 200 deafblind people is currently taking place at the Children's Home for deafblind children, which is located in Sergiev Posad.

At the beginning of the 1930s, L.S. Vygotsky developed a theoretical proposition that mental development takes the form of training. From his point of view, it is possible to find out the relationship between development and learning by applying the

method of active and purposeful formation of certain mental qualities of a person. Initially, it is necessary to perform this process in special experimental conditions which reveal the nature of the process being studied. Based on knowledge of these conditions, it is possible to form the person's abilities in the usual circumstances of his life-sustaining activity. This new method for that time was called "genetic and modeling".

In contrast to the views of idealist psychologists who explained the facts of the successful education and training of deafblind children as evidence of the divine "awakening" of the hidden human soul, a concept was formulated by domestic psychologists L.S. Vygotsky, S.Ya. Rubinstein and A.N. Leontiev. In this concept, the human psyche is considered as the result, function and process of objective activity and communication, where the social becomes individual, the objective-historical becomes subjective and the psyche in the forms of consciousness and conscious activity reflects the properties and interrelations of the objective and social world.

Practically and theoretically, these ideas were applied by I.A. Sokolyansky and A.I. Meshcheryakov in a scientifically based and experimentally tested psychological and pedagogical system which provides deafblind people high level of education and development, using a way of treating children that is the closest to the settings of the genetic and modeling method. According to A.I. Meshcheryakov, psychological and pedagogical system for a deafblind person opens for him/her the opportunity to carry out "reflection", i.e. look at himself/herself from the outside, as if by the eyes of another person, analyze his/her actions and activities from the point of view of the culture norms expressed by mankind in any life area. There is a phenomenon that is peculiar only to man. It is the phenomenon of "I", the phenomenon of the "soul". A deaf, blind and mute child, brought up and developed according to this method, confidently steps over the barrier set for him by blind-deafness [4]. Turning to the deaf-blindness as a unique scientific material, domestic scientists I.A. Sokolyansky, A.I. Meshcheryakov, A.I. Leontiev, E.V. Ilyenkov and V.V. Davydov showed the possibility of the formation of the human psyche by the teacher, since in the case of deaf-blindness without specially organized instruction, the possibility of spontaneous, independent development of the psyche is excluded. They argued that by a deafblind child, all functions must be formed at a pre-specified level, while the construction and formation of the mental process serve simultaneously as a means of forming the personality and a means of its investigation. Turning to the problem of deaf-mutism with blindness as a scientific and human problem, I.A. Sokolyansky wrote that it has long been clear that deaf-mutism with blindness as a scientific problem was not only of practical importance. Deaf, blind and mute people are a unique object in nature for studying such "secrets in the development of the personality of individual, which in other ways cannot be learned [1]. Philosopher E.V. Ilyenkov, evaluating the results of training the deafblind students at Moscow State University, said that the work of Sokolyansky-Meshcheryakov greatly expands the horizons of our notions, not only and not so much about the development possibilities of deaf, blind and mute people, but about the intellectual and moral potential that is hidden in every so-called "normal" person. This is its colossal moral and

pedagogical significance for all of us, for our pedagogy, for our school as well as for the entire sphere of education and training [2].

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Achievements in the teaching of deafblind O.I. Skorohodova and four deafblind students of Moscow State University (N.N. Korneyeva, Yu.M. Lerner, S.A. Sirotkin and A.V. Suvorov) pushed into the background the issues of initial inclusion in special education. There were the time of the loss of sight and hearing as well as the presence of the life period of normal development in early childhood. The dominant position for a deafblind child was the averaged approach without taking into account his initial life experience and the presence of residual vision and hearing functions, with orientation in teaching only to tactile perception. This approach is typical for the scientific position of A.I. Meshcheryakova, E.V. Ilyenkov and V.V. Davydova, where the diversity of cases and types of deaf-blindness was not taken into account. The main thing was the identification of one-type social factors of mental development and the dependence of these factors on the objective world and social relations of people, but not on biological factors that is the dependence of mental development on the natural inclinations and peculiarities of the impaired vision and hearing in the vital activity of deafblind people. The question of how the time of loss of sight and hearing affects the mental development of deafblind children remained unaddressed. Domestic and foreign practice of teaching the deafblind people knows only one case of achieving a very high level of development of deafblind Elena Keller, whose lesion occurred at an early age (1 year 8 months). However, there are enough examples of the achievement of a high level of development by people whose deaf-blindness occurred at a later age (5-12 years). These were O.I. Skorokhodova and deafblind graduates of the Faculty of Psychology of Moscow State University named after M.V. Lomonosov N. Krylatova, Yu. Lerner, A. Suvorov and S. Sirotkin. Data on highly educated deafblind people with congenital deaf-blindness are absent.

The psychological and pedagogical system of I.A. Sokolyansky, A.I. Meshcheryakov is developed for training and education of the most difficult category — deafblinds from the birth. This system is intended for the attraction of the deafblind child to activity in the society. First of all, this development of the deafblind in the world orientation, starting from the satisfaction of physical needs by acquaintance with the objective world which is directly included in this process. In development of organic needs of the child there is an entry into the social relations, development of contact with surrounding persons. In the process of mental development the objective and social experience of the child extends and becomes more and more generalized, the sphere of requirements changes. At early stages of education of children with inheritable or early acquired deafblindness this system is very effective and appropriate. The book of A. I. Meshcheryakov "Deafblind children" was published in 1974; the author stands for the term of "deaf-mutism with blindness" [3]. The term "deafblindness" came into scientific use in the second half of the 70<sup>th</sup>. It is used in the enlarged sense and specifies people with various vision and hearing disorders and needing the specialized help. V.N. Chulkov in 2001 has specified an essence of a term of

"deafblindness": "... in the nomination of defects only initial defects are defined in this way, for example, the deafblindness. If postprimary deviations of development are appeared in the term (as in the word of "deaf-mutism with blindness" where "mutism" has designated the lack of the speech which is socially caused the consequence of deafness, i.e. postprimary defect), then it is necessary to recognize this term as inexact and outdated" [5].

The further development of the psychological and pedagogical system of I.A. Sokolyansky, A.I. Meshcheryakova has been received in the process of deduction, from the philosophical concept of the world, human society to the self-perception, "soul", "selfhood", and relied on the dialectic tradition of theoretical reproduction of mentality. The system has gained the development in E.V. Ilyenkov and A.I. Meshcheryakov's work with the group of pupils of high school, and then students of MSU as N. Korneyeva, Yu. Lerner, S. Sirotkin and A. Suvorov which had rather high level of the general mental and speech development.

However the psychology and pedagogical system of I.A. Sokolyansky, A.I. Meshcheryakova did not use the possibility of residual vision and hearing. It characterizes the system as the mentality which does not need the attraction of residual functions of vision and hearing for the development and forming the mentality on the minimum touch base — tactile perception.

V.N. Chulkov, characterizing this period of development of a tactile sign pedagogy, notes: "... a little unilateral understanding of the cultural and historical theory of development of thinking dominated when mastering touch culture is not included in problems of cultural development of deafblind pupils, believing its role either neutral, or minor in relation to intellectual development and, so the corresponding pedagogical work considering as waste of time" [6].

The complex clinical and psychological and pedagogical search of children with deep vision and hearing disorders has been begun in our country in the eighties and has shown the extreme heterogeneity of groups of children (V.N. Chulkov, M.S. Pevzner, G.P. Bertyn, R.A. Mareeva) [6].

As the group of deafblind children is extremely various by structure of defect and according to the characteristic of development, in the late eighties the differentiated approach has been the basis and recognized not only welfare and pedagogical factors, but also considered the state of sensory activity, deafblindness type, supported the formation of polysensor perception and oral speech. Works of M.S. Pevzner, G.P. Bertyn, T.A. Basilova, E.L. Goncharova, V.N. Chulkov were devoted to the structure analysis of defect of deafblinds, differentiated approach to their training and education [6]. The differentiation of teaching and educational work with deafblinds became the main way of improvement of the theory and practice in tactile sign pedagogy. There was a denial of average approach to the deafblind child disregarding the state of residual sensor activity. In the eighties the residual vision and hearing of children and also preservation and development of available acoustical and visual functions have been made active use in the course of training. A problem of use of residual hearing in the work with deafblinds in work on the verbal

speech was a subject of discussions. The ideas on development and use of hearing began to get into methods of training of deafblinds. New progressive views on development of residual vision and hearing have led to attempts of opposition of the theoretical concept of A.I. Meshcheryakov considering the process of "cultivation-humanization" of the deaf, blind and mute child as the main direction of special training - the line of use of touch. Possibilities of use of residual vision in the course of training of the deafblind children, for the creation of technical means providing the differentiated training (A.E. Paltov) [7] were investigated.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The examination of children is conducted in the clinical, clinical and genetic, psychological, pedagogical directions. Now methods of training of deafblinds include the integrated effect on development of residual vision, hearing, intelligence, neuromuscular system that allows realizing fully the potential opportunities of deafblind children in the development process. The scientific work considering deafblindness is carried out by Professor A.V. Suvorov. He is the author of a number of books: "School of mutual humanity", "The deafblind in the world of people having vision and hearing", "The advantage (a lyrical and psychological self-research)" and also collected books "Experimental Philosophy" and "The intelligence agent on the difficult planet: pages from the diary". The further development of scientific research in problems of the help to persons with multiple defects is carried out by laboratory of education methods of children with integrated defects of IKP of RAE. Major efforts on support of deafblinds is carried out by the Connection fund. The main objective of fund - the full and system assistance by the deafblind in all territory of Russia.

The activity of the Sergiyev Posad orphanage for deafblind children consists in the organization of conditions and actions for the successful training and education of children with diversified defects. The syllabus forms knowledge, skills necessary for deafblinds for strong activity.

The program of training and education of children of preschool age existing in establishment is focused on mastering skills of self-service, to development of communication, orientation in space, receiving elementary mathematical representations. Children of advanced age study the following disciplines: subject and practical training, mathematics, natural sciences, Russian, music and rhythmic. The language development remains the main problem in training; much attention is paid to the accumulation and activation of the vocabulary, formation of the phrase speech. Deafblind children

master the speech in the shape – tactile, oral, and written with use of a plane graphic printing and relief-point font of Braille. An important and difficult task of training of deafblinds is the formation of oral speech. During the lessons the pronunciation, acoustical and tactile and vibration perception are developed. The correctional and pedagogical work on formation and development of full reader's activity is organized. The program of training has included the section "Social Orientation" that is caused by the need of implementation of deafblinds' training for life.

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