

“Pseudoscientists” Training: Pedology Courses and Courses for Educational Institutions Doctors in Petrograd (1919-1923)

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Abstract—The present study is devoted to the history of attempts to organize in Petrograd two centers for the training of pedologists during the early post-revolutionary years - Courses for doctors of educational institutions at Petrograd Pedological Institute and Higher pedological courses of the Psychoneurological Academy. The centers mentioned have not yet become the subject of historical research. The idea of an expanded Psychoneurological Academy, to which the courses belonged, proved to be not viable, and a number of the projects should rather be considered as interesting experiments, unable to play a significant role in Russian science due to their short history. Nevertheless, their history demonstrates innovative educational programs, interdisciplinary and integrated approaches in the training of personnel for children-oriented work. Pedology, having been proclaimed pseudoscience, forced similar projects implementation onto the back burner for many years, despite their great relevance over the next several decades.

Keywords—pedology, Soviet science, Psychoneurological Academy, V.M. Bekhterev, K.I. Povarnin, pseudoscience

I. INTRODUCTION

Issues of pseudoscience in the context of the history of the Soviet science, especially the state influence on the development of certain ideas within its framework remain topical for research. Such anti-scientific theories that triumphed in the Soviet Union, as Lysenkoism or “the Japhetic theory” by N. Ya. Marr are excellent examples of the disastrous consequences of science ideologization and its complete dependence on politics. Alongside the triumph of anti-scientific ideas in the Soviet times, even science that was not pseudoscientific could be proclaimed as such. This also refers to pedology, the science of the complex study of childhood, which has attracted the attention of a number of domestic specialists since the beginning of the 20th century, when various pedological research centers were founded. The period of the celebration of pedology was the first post-revolutionary decade, when the authorities readily responded to various scientific initiatives that they considered useful. One of the consequences of this was the support of pedology, designed to help bring up the new socialist man. However, in the 1930s it was actively criticized, and after the Decree of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet

Union “On pedological perversions in the system of the People's Commissariat of Education” dated July 4, 1936, it was proclaimed pseudoscience and denounced. The present study is devoted to the history of attempts to organize in Petrograd two centers for the training of pedologists during the early post-revolutionary years - Courses for doctors of educational institutions at the Petrograd Pedological Institute and Higher pedological courses of the Psychoneurological Academy. The centers mentioned have not yet become the subject of historical research. The study of their curricular peculiarities, goals and objectives can complement existing ideas about how supporters of pedology saw its role in raising a child and what skills they considered necessary to train specialists working with children.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The history of Russian pedology has always attracted scholars' attention. In particular, E.M. Balashov [1] and N.S. Kurek [2] devoted their monographs to its history. Among the works that sought to trace its history in Russia, it is also worth mentioning the articles by A.A. Romanov [3] and V.B. Pomelov [4]. A number of studies are devoted to biographies and the scientific heritage of prominent ideologues and popularizers of this discipline: V.N. Basov [5], P.P. Blonskyi [6, 7], V.M. Bekhterev [8, 9] and others. The history of the ban of pedology in the USSR is receiving the greatest attention [10, 11, 12, 13, 14]. The history of pedology is often touched upon in works devoted to the history of national pedagogy and psychology [15, 16].

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodological framework of the study is the general scientific dialectical method of cognition, which includes the principles of historicism, objectivity, and system. The tasks set were solved through integration of general scientific methods (logical, historical), as well as special historical (problematic-chronological, comparative-historical) and scientific methods. As issues of history of Russian science are often examined under different ideological perspectives and based on certain policies, the author addressed the principles of epistemological neutrality advocated by S. Aurox.

IV. COURSES FOR DOCTORS OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS UNDER THE PEDOLOGICAL INSTITUTE IN PETROGRAD

Specialists training was one of the most important tasks of pedologists in post-revolutionary times. In particular, such training was carried out at the Psychoneurological Institute, transformed at the end of 1921 into the Psychoneurological Academy. There, back in 1909, the Pedological Institute was founded [1, p. 27]. In 1919, the Institute authority decided to develop advanced training for doctors of educational institutions: school, kindergarten and nursery doctors. The director of the institute K.I. Povarnin argued in his note devoted to the organization of courses that “school life strongly raises the question of the need for doctors who are specially trained to work in educational institutions. According to doctors themselves, those of them who do not have such special training cannot perform difficult and responsible duties” [17]. Under the latter, he understood the study of children’s giftedness, their familiarity with issues of gender and monitoring of their sexual development, proper mental and physical development, and compliance of their living conditions with hygiene requirements. Doctors with only general medical degree could not “cope with such duties”, and in the worst-case scenario, their activity was considered harmful to the school [17].

K.I. Povarnin believed there were two possible types of staff training. The first type was “on a nationwide scale”, for which a special group of higher medical institutions students should be selected, so that their curriculum would include subjects necessary for school doctors. Interestingly, the scientist likened his idea to historical and philological faculties of universities, where vocational subjects were taught depending on the major. The second type included “courses that give all the necessary practical and theoretical training for doctors of educational institutions”. The courses were to provide practice for the participants to “acquire not only the theory needed, direct visual instruction on thorough examination of children, their physical growth and development, manual labor training, etc., but also master the relevant practical knowledge” [17].

K.I. Povarnin considered the first option less preferable since its implementation required “a long time”. In this regard, he solicited the Preschool Department and the Scientific Medical Department of the National Commissariat of Education for the allocation of funds for the maintenance of the courses planned for opening at the Pedological Institute. In total, by estimate, he asked for 170 thousand rubles to be allocated, 102 thousand rubles of which was payment for lectures.

The curriculum took 320 hours of study and included 14 courses: 1) anatomy and physiology of child’s body; 2) the psychophysiology of the sense organs; 3) embryology and the study of heredity in connection with upbringing problems; 4) children’s hygiene and physical education (with particular attention to outdoor games, manual labor, gymnastics, sports, etc.); 5) the psychology of childhood and the hygiene of the mental life of children with the basics of general psychology; 6) methods of psychological research; 7) basics of anthropology; 8) history of pedagogical studies with the basics

of general pedagogy; 9) sexual education; 10) school hygiene in connection with the fundamentals of school studies; 11) children’s pathology and therapy with a method for studying the physical individuality of children; 12) the study of internal secretion; 13) general psychopathology with the doctrine of child defectiveness and the basics of pathological pedagogy; 14) psychoneuroses in childhood. The courses outlines were to complement each other, so that the curriculum was a single whole. Much attention was paid to practice, the purpose of which was “not only to familiarize students with the research methodology, types of manual labor, gymnastic movements, but also to acquire solid practical knowledge necessary for a school doctor” [17]. Unfortunately, at that stage the project was not to be. This could have been due to the hardest conditions ensuant on the Civil War and critical food and military situation in Petrograd.

V. HIGHER PEDOLOGICAL COURSES OF THE PSYCHONEUROLOGICAL ACADEMY

At the beginning of 1921, two years after the proposal of Courses for educational institutions doctors, Pedological Courses were organized at the Psychoneurological Institute. The courses were supposed “to deepen the psychological knowledge of the workers of labor schools and to train examining psychologists (school psychologists)” [18]. The duration of courses was 6 months, and classes took place 3 days a week - on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 9 till 12 a.m. and from 2 till 5 p.m. The curriculum included the following subjects: psychophysiology, anatomy and physiology of the nervous system, general psychology, reflexology, introduction to experimental psychology, methods of psychological experiment, psychology of children and adolescents, individual psychology (lectures, seminars and practical classes), psychopathology and pathological pedagogy (lectures, seminars and practical classes), theory of education (principles of labor education, basics of mental, social, aesthetic, etc. education), physical education (demonstration and practical classes), child and school age hygiene (lectures, seminars and practical classes), eugenics, and healthcare. The courses were taught by professors and teachers of the Psychoneurological Institute. Laboratories and auxiliary research institutions of the Institute were provided for practical training. Special focus was on the fact that the courses consisted “mainly of practical classes, in some departments being arranged locally in schools, orphanages, etc. According to the wishes of the students, lectures and practical classes could also be organized in subjects not mentioned in the program” [18].

According to the curriculum, the Courses included 13 departments: experimental biology (professor N. A. Belov), reflexology (academician V. M. Bekhterev), animal (zoo) reflexology (teacher L. L. Vasiliev), anatomy and physiology of the nervous system with psychopathology (professor A.B. Gerber), psychophysiology (teacher B.I. Rabinovich), anthropology (professor L.G. Orshansky), general psychology (professor K. I. Povarnin), individual psychology (teacher B. N. Myasishchev), childhood psychology (teacher N. M. Shchelobanov), anatomy and physiology of child’s body (lecturer M.J. Breitman), general and experimental pedagogy

(professor A.K. Barsuk), pedagogy of pathology (professor A.S. Griboedov) [19]. Most subjects were given 6 lecture hours.

The lectures were delivered by leading experts in their fields. In particular, reflexology was taught by V.M. Bekhterev, general psychology by K.I. Povarnin, psychology of childhood and adolescence by L.G. Orshansky, psychoanalysis and psychoneuroses of childhood by T.K. Rosenthal, pedagogy of pathology by A.S. Griboedov, school-age hygiene by V.P. Kashkadamov, methods of psychological profiles by G.I. Rossolimo, courses on eugenics, development of children's speech and healthcare by D.V. Feldberg [19].

Only a few months after the announcement of the beginning of the courses, their structure and plan changed. According to the regulation on pedological courses developed in April 1921, their aim became more complex: the training of "scientists in the field of pedology, reflexology and psychology, as well as practical figures on the examination of childhood". Course duration ranged from one to two years. The training was divided into three "working periods". The first included the following subjects:

- *anatomy and physiology of childhood;*
- *anatomy and physiology of the nervous system;*
- *anthropology;*
- *psychophysiology;*
- *reflexology;*
- *general psychology;*
- *experimental psychology;*
- *physical education;*
- *social and labor education.*

Lectures were combined with relevant practical classes and seminars. The second working period included:

- *individual psychology;*
- *the psychology of childhood and adolescence;*
- *experimental pedagogy;*
- *pathological pedagogy;*
- *hygiene of children and adolescents.*

Observations and experiments in children's institutions were added to practical classes and seminars. The third working period also implied learning by doing and included the following subjects:

- *didactics (theory of education and training);*
- *childhood psychoneuroses;*
- *education of ethically disabled children;*
- *education and training of children with special needs;*
- *methods of research and training of a normal and defected child;*
- *eugenics [20].*

As seen, the range of disciplines read was wide. Courses organically served as refresher courses at the Psychoneurological Institute. All scientific and educational aids of the Psychoneurological Institute were to help achieve the goals set. Particular attention was paid to practice, and

some studies were arranged locally in schools, orphanages, etc. "A special group for the training of teachers in the psychology of labor schools" was organized at the Courses [20]. The creators of the Courses understood that the lack of basic education and experience could lead to the fact that pedologists would cause more harm than good, therefore, only people with higher education or graduated from labor schools and having pedagogical experience were accepted [20].

It was assumed that students of the Courses would be given all the rights of students of higher educational institutions (§ 8 of the Regulations), but the Board of the Education Section of the Education Department of the Petrograd Provincial Department of Public Education decided to withdraw the paragraph [21]. However, school employees, who were students of the Courses and who performed the works established by their program, were considered seconded by the Department of Public Education and were temporary excused from their duties.

This Regulation was approved on April 19, 1921, as reported by the Head of the Subdivision of Education Personnel of the Petrograd Provincial Department of National Education in a letter to the board of Courses of April 20, 1921 [22].

Subsequently, V.M. Bekhterev, the President of the Psychoneurological Academy, argued in his memorandum to V.I. Nevsky, the representative of the Main Directorate of Vocational Education for the Affairs of Petrograd Higher Educational Institutions, that the Courses were "an especially important and valuable establishment of the Academy". Pointing out the Courses should be renamed into "Higher Courses of the Psychoneurological Academy", V.M. Bekhterev emphasized that Courses' objective was training of teachers of psychology, pedology and pedagogy in labor schools and in pedagogical technical schools, as well as lecturers in these subjects, and "childhood inspectors from a psycho-physiological point of view (consulting psychologists for medical pedagogical ambulant clinics, distribution points, schools and preschool institutions), scientists and experts in reflexology, psychology, pedology, and experimental pedagogy." According to him, the quality of training was guaranteed by close connection of the institutions of the Psychoneurological Academy, so that there were "all the necessary conditions for the students of the courses to prepare for the above mentioned practical specialties" [23].

In June 1922, in compliance with V.M. Bekhterev's wish, Courses underwent reorganization and became "Higher Pedological Courses at the Psychoneurological Academy". In January 1923 they were included in the Pedagogical Institute of Social Education and Defectology of a Child, which was also a part of the Academy. The program of the institute included most of the subjects provided by the Courses. Due to the scientific infrastructure, practical application remained an important part of the training [24, p. 3]. Thus, the educational program continued to be original and innovative. However, this scientific and educational center did not exist for long: in 1924 it was renamed into the Institute of Pedology and Defectology, and in January 1925 it was incorporated into the Leningrad Pedagogical Institute named after A.I. Herzen.

VI. CONCLUSION

State support of pedology in post-revolutionary years made pedology staff training a burning issue. The Psychoneurological Institute, headed by V.M. Bekhterev, was deeply involved in the process. In 1919 K.I. Povarin, the director of the Pedological Institute affiliated with the Psychoneurological Institute, initiated courses for the doctors of educational institutions. The project was not implemented, but in 1921 Pedological Courses for pedology staff training were organized at the Psychoneurological Institute (later - Higher Pedological Courses at the Psychoneurological Academy). As E.A. Dolgova and D.A. Khivinova rightly mention, the idea of an expanded Psychoneurological Academy, to which the Courses belonged, proved to be not viable, and a number of the projects should rather be considered as interesting experiments [24, p. 7-8], unable to play a significant role in Russian science due to their short history. Nevertheless, their history demonstrates innovative educational programs, interdisciplinary and integrated approaches in the training of personnel for children-oriented work. Pedology, having been proclaimed pseudoscience, forced similar projects implementation onto the back burner for many years, despite their great relevance over the next several decades.

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