

Theoretical Analyses

Pedology as a Complex Science Devoted to the Study of Children in Russia: The History of its Origin and Elimination

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Abstract

This article traces the history of pedology in the works of Russian psychologists, doctors and pedagogues at the turn of the 20th century. Its main aim is to provide characteristic features of its development in chronological order and at the same time to underline general ideas. A quantitative analysis of books on pedology, categorised according to subject, is presented; and reasons for the elimination of pedology are explored, in terms of social and ideological changes.

Keywords: Russia, pedology, ideology, methodology

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The main purposes of this paper are to:

- identify the main prerequisites of pedology as a new branch of psychological knowledge in Russia;
- characterize the dynamics of development of pedology as a science in the context of the time;
- discover the reasons for the elimination of pedology in Russia.

The need for understanding the historical path of pedology in Russia is relevant for a number of reasons:

- to expand the field of historiography by incorporating data on the formation of pedology in Russia at the beginning of 20th century, taking into account the features of socio-economic and cultural background;
- to highlight the importance of building relationships and provide an adequate assessment of the achievements of different psychological schools of the past;
- to provide a different perspective on contemporary problems of integration of science.

Topicality of Research

In the modern world of psychological literature, there are many works on the history of Russian psychology of the Soviet period represented by various authors from different countries (Brozek, 1962; Brozek, 1964; Brozek & Slobin, 1972; Grigorenko, Ruzgis, & Sternberg, 1997; Joravsky, 1989; Mintz, 1959; Mintz, 1962; Murphy & Murphy, 1962; Simon & Simon, 2003). The problem of education and radicalism in Tsarist Russia was raised by Brower (1975). In Russia, there is also a large number of publications on the history of educational psychology (Dzhurunsky, 1998; Martsinkovskaja, 2004; Nikol'skaya, 1995, and others). A comparative analysis of Soviet and American

psychology during World War II is reflected in the works by American and Russian psychologists (Gilgen, Gilgen, Koltsova, & Oleinik, 1997). A lot of works were devoted to a famous Russian pedologist Lev Vygotsky and published by foreign and Russian authors (Cole & Wertsch, 1996; Daniels, 1996; Daniels, Wertsch, & Cole, 2007; Kozulin, 1990; Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000; Newman & Holzman, 1993; van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991; van der Veer & Valsiner, 1994; van der Veer & Yasnitsky, 2011; Veresov, 1999; Vygodskaya & Lifanova, 1999a; Vygodskaya & Lifanova, 1999b; Wertsch, 1985; Yasnitsky, 2010; Yasnitsky, 2011a; Yasnitsky, 2011b). No doubt, Vygotsky's theory is well known as a psychological approach to the child development but his pedological works remain underestimated.

Having analysed existing studies on the history of psychology, we can assume that as it stands, there is no evidence suggesting that the subject of formation of pedology as the newly emerged science in Russia (at the turn of the 20th century) has been explored or addressed. This conclusion explains the choice of the topic for this article.

Categorisation of Subjects

The Russian National Library in St. Petersburg contains 833 books on pedology, published in the period between 1904 and 1936 (National Library of Russia, 2010). Most studies on the psyche of the child published at that time could be divided into a number of groups: textbooks on pedology, methods and programmes of pedology, age-appropriate stages of mental development, abnormalities in mental development, professional orientation and the role of environment in the mental development of children.

Here you can see the chart (Figure 1) that represents all 6 categories in percentages.

Figure 1 illustrates that the highest percentage of books is taken by the role of environment in the mental development of children (40.6%). A large number of works on this subject is explained by the main purpose of pedology as a newly emerged science, which was the aim to create a person of the new formation. It was designed to grow a new breed of a man. According to the views of famous pedologists (Vygotsky, 1928; Vygotsky, 1931; Vygotsky, 1935; Vygotsky, 2010; Blonsky, 1930; Blonsky, 1934; Basov, 1928, and others), human beings are dependent on the socio-cultural context. The explanation of human behaviour doesn't lay in the depths of the brain or the soul but in the external living conditions of individuals and, most of all, in the external conditions of their social life and in their socio-historical forms of existence.

Such a large volume of books about methods and programmes of pedology (23.0%) can be explained by the fact that pedology as a science was in its formative stages. As a result of that, questions of the subject matter and research methods were key to pedologists and caused a lot of debates. Average amount of work on pedology was related to the problems of abnormalities in mental development (11.2%) and age-appropriate stages of mental development (11.5%). This is due to the fact that amongst pedologists there were a lot of doctors. Most of the books devoted to the age-appropriate stages of mental development (11.5%) were also written by doctors. But we can note that some books of this category included works written in the form of diaries, observations of children by their mothers or fathers. The small volume of books about professional orientation (6.1%) can be explained by the fact that those problems only began to be developed by pedologists at that period of time.

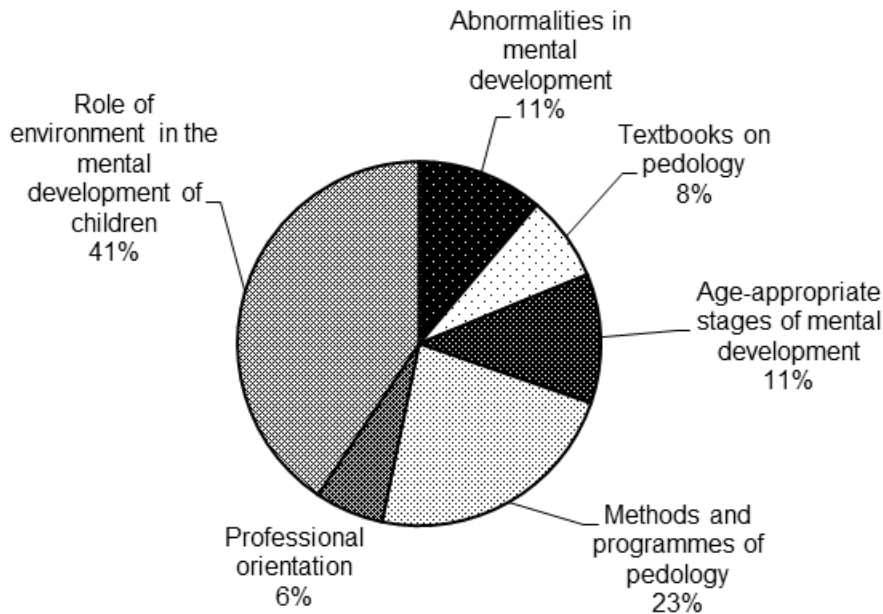


Figure 1. Percentages of books published, according to subject in the period 1904 to 1936 (National Library of Russia, 2010)

Prerequisites of Pedology

In Russia, the formation of pedology as an independent branch of psychological knowledge coincided with the birth of experimental psychology as a science. It can be noted that at the beginning of the 20th century, psychologists and teachers in Russia took part in intensive theoretical, methodological and scientific-organizational activities. The development of methodological research in child development took a new step, when in 1901 the first laboratory of experimental educational psychology opened under the leadership of Alexander Nechaev (1870 -1948) in St. Petersburg (Nechaev, 1901; Nechaev, 1902; Nechaev, 1925; Nechaev, 1990). Nechaev graduated from the University of St. Petersburg (faculty of Philosophy). In 1898 he visited Germany, where he went to the laboratory of Wundt in Leipzig, the laboratory of Muller in Gottingen and the laboratory of Kraepelin in Heidelberg. Whilst in Germany, it became Nechaev's dream to open an experimental psychological laboratory in Russia, which proved very difficult. He faced strong opposition from Alexander Vvedensky, chairman of the St. Petersburg Philosophical Society, who did not recognize the method of experiment. Vvedensky was one of the opponents of Nechaev's thesis "Modern experimental psychology in its relation to issues of schooling" (1901) and through Vvedensky's efforts Nechaev's dissertation work was rejected by the Council of History and Philology of St. Petersburg University. Nechaev was forced to withdraw from the university. He wrote in his diary: "I was deeply depressed. I had no energy. Only darkness in my soul" (Nechaev, 1990, p. 206). Fortunately it was during those trying times, when Nechaev received a letter from Germany in which Meumann was asking Nechaev if he would be interested in having one of his works published in a German journal "Archiv für die gesamte Psychologie".

Meumann's letter lifted his spirits and against all odds Nechaev realized his dream of opening the laboratory in St. Petersburg at the Pedagogical Museum of military educational institutions. Nechaev purchased the necessary equipment for the laboratory. In a short time, tachistoscopes, mechanical chronoscopes and a special device for

the study of memory were made in European factories using Nechaev's drawings. A total of 64 specialist units were eventually bought for conducting tests and other experimental work in the new laboratory.

The laboratory helped scientists study the characteristics of the following phenomena: attention, mental abilities of pupils, and basics of the psychological process of reading. All the results were published in 1901 and 1902 in the book titled "The observation of children's interests and the work of their memory from the age of 7 to 16" (Nechaev, 1902). At the end of 1903 in the Tauride Palace in St. Petersburg an international exhibition called "Children's World" opened its doors, which presented Nechaev's laboratory equipment and the results of its research. At the end of the exhibition, Nechaev laboratory and the scientist himself were awarded 2 gold medals for the outstanding work. The research conducted in Nechaev's laboratory was well known abroad. His laboratory inventions were displayed in many exhibitions in Geneva (1908), Frankfurt am Main (1909) and Berlin (1912).

The Dynamics of Development of Pedology as a Science in the Context of Time

Figure 2 shows that we can highlight three stages in the development of pedology as a science in the period between 1904 and 1936:

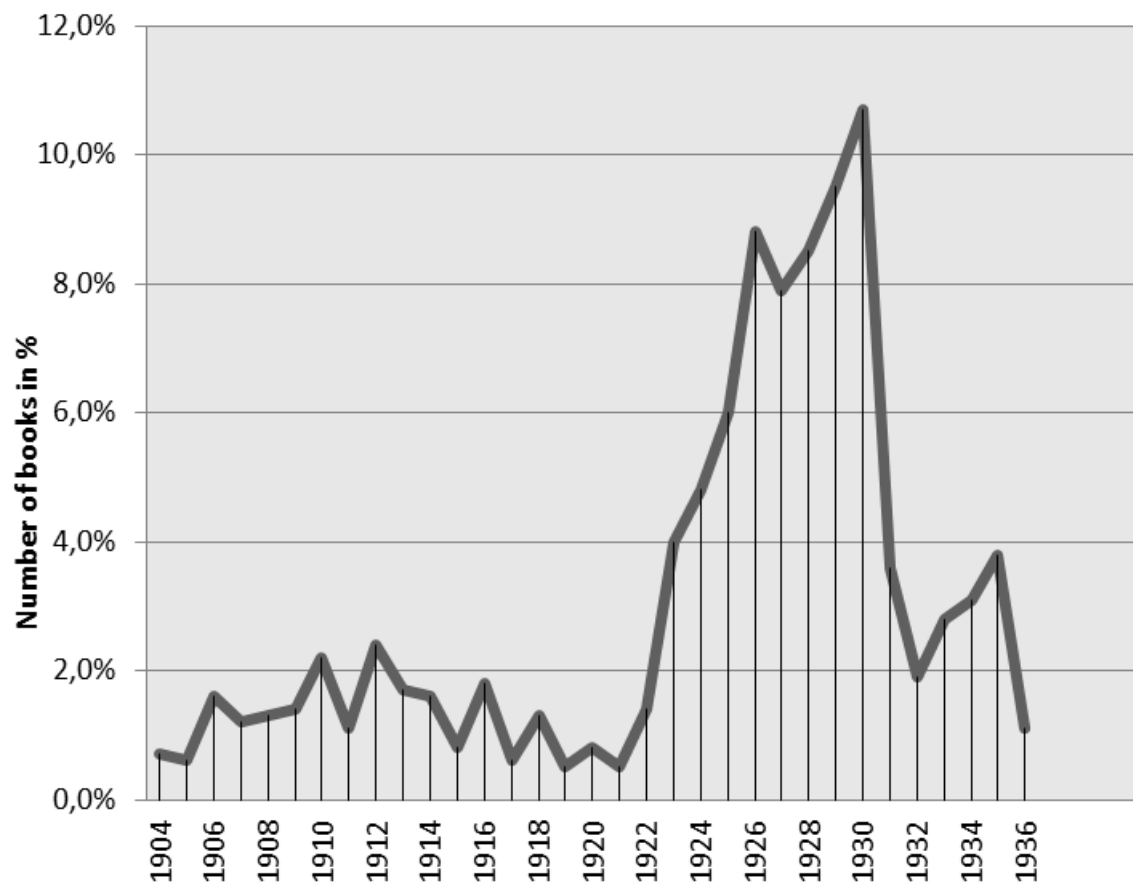


Figure 2. The dynamics of development of pedology as a science between 1904 and 1936

The first stage: from 1904 to 1922 can be characterized as the period of formation of pedology as a new branch of psychological knowledge in Russia, it shows slow accumulation of pedological books published at that time.

The second stage: from 1923 to 1930 - is the period when pedology reached its peak, accompanied by the dramatic growth of the number of works published on pedology.

The third period: from 1931 to 1936 is the period of stagnation and an overall sharp drop in the number of books published on pedology.

Characteristics of the First Period

In 1904, Nechaev pioneered Russia's first pedological courses, that were set to study an individual as the subject of education. Not only teachers but also parents attended such pedological lectures. They were taught by qualified specialists with high academic potential.

One of Nechaev's associates was Alexander Lazursky (1874 – 1917). Lazursky graduated from the Military Medical Academy in St. Petersburg. In 1899, he became Professor of Medicine and was elected a Member of the Psychiatric and Neurological Society in St. Petersburg. Like Nechaev, he also visited the laboratory of Kraepelin in Heidelberg and the laboratory of Wundt in Leipzig. On his return from Germany, Lazursky developed his own method of natural experiment. The essence of this method lies in a combination of the advantages of observation and laboratory experiments. Lazursky believed that during the process of natural activities, for example, during a game, the researcher could set certain conditions which would result in a child behaving in such a way that would allow researchers to observe characteristic features of that particular child (Lazursky, 1918).

Very popular among trainees were the lectures by A. A. Krogius (1871 – 1933). Krogius graduated from the Medical Faculty of Yuryev University (today known as Tartu University). His doctoral dissertation on "The spiritual world of the blind" was defended at the Military Medical Academy in 1909. Krogius investigated the process of memorization of the blind using the method of H. Ebbinghaus. According to his observation, in all cases, the blind memorized texts better than the sighted. Krogius's studies were well-known to his colleagues in the West. He gave lectures at the International Psychological Congresses in Innsbruck, Rome and Göttingen (in Ponukalin, 2010).

In 1908 in Moscow, A. Bernstein opened a similar to Nechaev's laboratory. By 1909, there were a total of 33 psychological laboratories opened across various educational establishments. Those laboratories were typically organized by the people who had completed full training on pedology or participated in conventions of experimental pedagogy and psychology.

By February 1917, the following laboratories were opened and working:

- Laboratory of Experimental Psychology and Child Neurology at the Neurological Institute of A. J. Kozhevnikov, under the direction of G. Rossolimo (Rossolimo, 1910);
- Moscow Medical and Pedagogical Experimental Station, under the direction of V. P. Kashenko (later renamed to Moscow Medical and Pedagogical Clinic);
- Psychological Institute at the 2nd Moscow State University, under the direction G. I. Chelpanov;
- The Central Pedological Institute, under the direction N. A. Ribnikov (1921).

In the first decade of the 20th century, the first programmes devoted to the study of children began to develop. One of the most complete and popular programmes was proposed by Grigory Rossolimo (1860 – 1928) and was called the method of "psychological profiles" (Rossolimo, 1910). Rossolimo graduated from the Medical Faculty

of Moscow State University. In 1911, he arranged Institute of Child Psychology and Neurology which he funded himself.

The method of "psychological profiles" by Rossolimo was a multidimensional programme for studying personality, which consisted of a number of experimental psychological methods. Summarising their results, the researcher could obtain an extensive understanding of the individual characteristics of a particular child. The originality of the method lay in the compilation of test tasks, and in the way the results were processed. The results of the study were presented in a visual schedule, which enabled analysis of the tested individual. Rossolimo derived a formula which transformed image data into arithmetic data. By the mid-twenties the method was used in more than 150 laboratories all over Russia. The "psychological profile" method was widely known abroad. It was used by Lipmann, Claparède, Schulze, Gieze, and others.

During the first period, some very traumatic events took place in Russia. In 1905 Russian Revolution brought enormous losses of population. It began on the 9th of January 1905, when Imperial troops in St. Petersburg shot a peaceful demonstration of workers led by the priest Georgy Gapon. That day was called "Bloody Sunday". He laid the foundation for the return to assassinations and massacres: between 1905 and 1907 there was a total of 204 terrorist attacks carried out in Russia (Yuferova & Trigub, 2001, p. 17). In 1914, Russia entered the First World War. In 1918, the Russian Civil War began. Those developments also brought many new victims: there was an increase in the number of homeless children and it was especially hard for the teenagers to experience the loss of loved ones. Pedology conducted numerous studies on the emotional state of children and adolescents at the given period of time. Their work concluded that the youth were especially affected by such changes amongst which there was a vast rise in suicide attempts.

That problem was addressed by a general practitioner E. Radin who developed a questionnaire intended for students of various educational institutions of St Petersburg. The research suggested that young people were very much disappointed with their lives in general. It revealed two types of disappointment: aggressive and apathetic. The principle cause of apathy was the desire to pursue strong sensations and as a result young people were suffering from emotional detachment. Others were characterized as lonely isolated from any form of communication individuals lacking ability to build relationships with other people (Radin, 1913).

Pedologists were also concerned about the growing crime amongst children. Gindes concluded that there were two main causes for criminal behaviour. The majority of youth crime was the result of socio-economic environment in which children lived. Crime was the "social product", caused by environment and upbringing. Gindes considered homelessness to be the main social cause of juvenile delinquency: "Unlimited freedom enjoyed by the homeless, destroying it, corrupts and entails an unnatural crime in the transitional age" (Gindes, 1923, p. 109).¹

The emergence of pedology in Russia was also linked with socio-economic and political situation in the country in the early 20th century. The Soviet Union embarked on building a great state of strong power. Such a state needed to educate "the new man", a good dedicator who could not only restore the economy, but also build a new communist government. The pedology as a new science was designed to solve that problem, perform an important government order.

Characteristics of the Second Period

Year 1923 marked the starting point when pedology flourished, reaching its peak in 1930. The sharp growth in the number of publications was from 1.4% in 1922 up to 4.0% in 1923, with the highest number of publications at 10.7% in 1930.

The rapid growth of pedology was supported by the following fact: in 1928 there were several academic establishments already opened in Moscow:

- National Research Institute for Scientific Pedagogy at Second Moscow State University (1926, AP Pinkevich);
- Pedological Department at the Institute of Research and Pedagogical Methods of Education (1922, VN Shulgin);
- Institute of Scientific Research of the methods of extracurricular activities (1922, AY Zax);
- Academy of Communist Education (1923, it had three pedological laboratories: SS Molozhavy, PP Blonsky, AB Zalkind);
- State Institute of Experimental Psychology (1924, KN Kornilov);
- State Institute of Physical Education (1918, VG Fulk);
- State Research Institute of Maternity and Early Childhood (1922, AS Durnovo);
- Department of Children's Health Hospital for Nervous Diseases at the First Moscow State University (1923, GI Rossolimo);
- National Institute of Social Hygiene People's Commissariat of Health (1923, AV Molkov);
- The higher educational courses at the Second Moscow State University (1924, AB Zalkind);
- National Museum of Toys (1918, ND Burtram);
- Institute for the Deaf and Mute Children (FA Rau);
- Research Institute of Occupational Diseases (1923, LS Bogolepova);
- Psychological Institute at the 2nd Moscow State University (G.I. Chelpanov);
- The Central Pedological Institute (1921, N. A. Ribnikov);
- State Moscow Neuropsychiatric Institute (A. P. Nechaev);
- State Medical Pedological Institute of People's Commissariat (M.O. Gurevich);
- Laboratory of Experimental Psychology and Child Psychoneurology at Neurological Institute of the 1st Moscow State University (G.I. Rossolimo);
- Medical and Pedagogical Clinic (V.P. Kashenko);
- Central Psychological Laboratory for Special Needs Schools (P.P. Sokolov);
- The Central Humanitarian-Pedagogical Institute (V.N. Shulgin);
- Museum of Early Childhood Education (E.A. Arkin).

A number of important pedological events took place during the second period: The first All-Russian psycho-neurological congress (1923); the second congress of social legal protection of minors (1923); the second All-Russian psycho-neurological congress (1924); the first All-Russian congress of teachers (1925); the second All-Union pedological conference (also known as "Pedological Meeting") (1927), All-Union pedological congress (1928), the first All-Union congress on the study of human behaviour (also known as "Behavioural Congress") (1930); the third All-Russian child welfare congress (1930).

In our view, it was during the second period when pedology sought to fulfill the social order of the Russian Communist Party - the creation of a new Marxist and Leninist psychology. It should be noted that at the beginning of the second period pedologists truly believed that the social environment was able to change the biological nature of a person. For many pedologists, the failure of the pedological doctrine became evident a lot later followed by the great disappointment in their high hopes and expectations.

A radically new approach was developed by K. N. Kornilov, which suggested that every person was the product of their social environment. Kornilov outlined his views on the principles that had to be used to build the new Soviet psychology in his report "Modern psychology and Marxism" at a Psychoneurological Congress in 1923 (Kornilov, 1924). He announced that the nature of mental processes was the only true materialist point of view. In his speech at the Congress, Kornilov expressed sharp criticism of Western empirical positivist psychology, as being highly subjective, individualistic and not reflecting true reality. According to Kornilov, empirical psychology was the study of isolated, unintegrated aspects of the human psyche, such as, for example, "ability", "memory", "attention", and others. He believed Marxist psychology, on the contrary, aimed to present personal development and its major properties with integrity, depending on the influence of the social environment. It should be noted that not all Western psychology was rejected by the leader of Soviet psychology, Kornilov. He thought it was possible to accept some of the ideas of American behaviourist psychology, Watson's doctrine in particular. However, Kornilov thought it necessary to add into Watson's concept, social factors besides biological factors that were affecting human behaviour. Kornilov became the head of the Institute of Psychology in Moscow, and initiated the change of the name of the institute to the Institute of Reactology. The leading theme of the institute was the "Investigation of the indigenous psychology of the Moscow proletarians by the method of determining the rate of reaction" (Petrovsky, 2007, p. 22). There is no doubt that the leading theme was the political agenda of the Bolshevik Party. Indeed, there was no difference in the speed of mental reaction of the proletariats who lived in Moscow, and the proletariats of any other city. Nevertheless, none of the staff of the Institute dared speak out against the designated theme. Thus, psychology had to serve the ideological requirements of the new state.

This was evidenced by the growing number of studies which analysed the role of the social situation in a child's development. This was expressed in the well-known slogan: "We are children of the revolution". These changes were linked to a new wave of communist ideas: bringing up a new person in a new society under different social conditions. It was thought that the character of a young person was determined by the type of work s/he was involved in. The industrial factor prevailed over others, making it the "constant" value, whilst gender and age were considered to be the "variables". Psychologists believed that in order to understand young people's behaviour they had to analyse every aspect of their living conditions.

One of the founders of pedology was Pavel Blonsky (1884 – 1941), professor at Moscow University. He graduated from the classics department of the faculty of history and philology at Kiev University. Blonsky was a well-known figure in the Soviet government. He worked with Lenin's wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya in the scientific education section of the State Academic Council. According to Blonsky, "pedology studies a complex of symptoms at different phases and stages of childhood in their temporal sequence and in their dependence on various environmental conditions" (Blonsky, 1934, p. 10). By the end of the 30's, Blonsky was disappointed in pedology, he actively debated with supporters of socio-genetics. He believed that the stages of human development laid down by the nature cannot be improved under the influence of social environment. Blonsky was a teacher of Vygotsky (1896-1934), who studied at the University of Shanyaysky in Moscow. According to Vygotsky's concept, the environment is the source of development. He formulated a number of laws of mental development in children -

the law of metamorphosis, the law of telling the differences in tempo and rhythm, the law of the development of higher mental functions and others (Vygotsky, 1928; Vygotsky, 1931; Vygotsky, 1935; Vygotsky, 2010).

During the last few years of the second period, a tough ideological control over the activities of scientists from the Bolshevik Party began. Responding to the demands of the Party, special attention was paid by psychologists to the influence of the social environment on a child's life. Joravsky wrote, that "although numerous psychological schools freely contended, the Party tended to favor theories that were, or claimed to be, objective, materialist, determinist" (Joravsky, 1989, p. 274).

The Commissariat of Education held a pedologists' meeting in Moscow in 1927 which marked the start of the crisis of pedology as a science. The main issues raised in that meeting were: the study of the role of the environment, heredity and physical development, the importance of the society as a factor in shaping a child's personality. There was also a lot of controversy around the issue of research methods in pedology. As a result of the discussions the view of socio-genetics (such as Zalkind, 1929; Zaluzhny, 1937) prevailed over the opinions of others. In 1929, the First Pedological Congress took place where a presentation was made by Aron Zalkind (1888 – 1936), the chief methodologist in pedology. Zalkind graduated from the medical faculty of Moscow State University. From 1917 to 1920 he was director of the Petrograd Psychotherapeutic Institute. After 1925, Zalkind was forced to distance himself from psychoanalysis and publicly repented of his "connections" with Freudianism, directed his scientific aspirations towards the developmental problems of pedology. In 1930, he headed the Institute of Psychology, Pedology and Psychotechnics in Moscow.

In his speech at the First Pedological Congress, Zalkind encouraged scientists to start building a class pedology, and to fight against dissent in science (Zalkind, 1929). Of course that approach forced scientists to observe a rigid political correctness in their works. That led pedology to evolve into a servant of state policy, which meant there was no freedom of speech in science and the search for the truth was prohibited. After 1929, a persecution began of scientists whose ideas did not conform to the political setting of the Bolshevik Party.

Characteristics of the Third Period

The third period was the period of stagnation of pedology and it started in 1931. The sharp drop in the number of publications from 10.7% in 1930 down to 3.6% in 1931 can be explained by the increased ideological pressure from the Bolshevik Party on pedologists, which led to the overall disappointment in pedology as a science.

In our view, 1930 was the turning point for pedology: the remaining 6 years were years of fruitless attempts by the majority of scientists to prove government ideologies in science both theoretically and practically. At the All-Union Congress on the study of a man in Leningrad in 1930, pedology was politicized further. In pedology, the period of "witch-hunting" begins on the pages of "Pedology" journal, edited by Zalkind, where Arkin, Bechterevev, Shelovanov and others were badly criticized for their work (Babushkin, 1932; Gelmont, 1931; Feofanov, 1932; Leventuev, 1931).

Between 1929 and 1931, Basov's brilliant work "Fundamentals of pedology" (Basov, 1928) was subject to the most severe criticism for its abstract-formal approach to the study of the mind of the child. Mihail Basov (1892 – 1931) was a student of Lazursky. From 1924 to 1931, he worked as a professor of pedology and psychology at the State Institute of Pedology in Leningrad and at the Leningrad Pedagogical Institute in the name of Herzen. Between 1920 and 1930, he was accused of being anti-Marxist and to re-instate his name he left science and took up mechanical fitter apprenticeship. Soon after, he received a small injury at the factory which caused blood

infection and death in 1931. On his deathbed Basov asked his wife to bring up their daughter to be a strong and loyal Communist. It should be noted that Basov was the first to underline the importance of "a person" playing an active part in building the environment. This idea was later developed further by Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1935).

In 1936, a new regulation was announced by the All-Russian Central Committee of the Communist Party of Bolsheviks called "Pedological distortions in the system of National Committees of Education" (in Rudneva, 1937). According to the new regulation, pedology was declared to be reactionary bourgeois science. The Bolshevik Party set a number of tasks for the scientists - one of which was to criticize all of the works on the theory of pedology that had been released in the press up until year 1936.

Just one year after the publication of the new regulation, a large number of articles criticizing pedologists appeared in the press (Ruskin, 1937; Rubinshtein, 1937; Rudneva, 1937; Svadkovsky, 1937; Zaluzhny, 1937). Svadkovsky called pedology "the servant of the capitalists» (Svadkovsky, 1937, p.13), which was intended to justify "Nazi educational policies," according to which education was only available for the chosen (Svadkovsky, 1937, p. 18). Svadkovsky was saying that because of pedological research, hundreds of children were classed as mentally retarded, and only a small group of "normal" children could receive complete education.

The testing method used by the pedologists sparked fierce debates and attracted strongest critique (Rubinshtein, 1937; Zaluzhny, 1937). Zaluzhny wrote that "the testing methods were developed and served as justification for the inequality of human beings and the human race» (Zaluzhny, 1937, p. 38). In addition, he pointed out the fundamental differences in the purposes of pedological studies. The bourgeois pedology was testing "in order to exploit individuals and use them to their advantage," whilst in Russia "the interests of each individual would come first and it was important to enrich people's knowledge and skills, without which they would not be able to become great communists" (Zaluzhny, 1937, p. 38).

As a result, work on developmental psychology ceased for many years. Only in 1948, works on child psychology by Ananjev and Leontjev started to appear (Ananjev, 1948; Leontjev, 1948). A lot later, in 1965, Dobrinin wrote a textbook on developmental psychology (Dobrinin, 1965).

Many pedologists led difficult lives. For example, Nechaev was convicted of Anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda and deported to Kazakhstan in 1935. He spent the last days of his life in a small town called Semipalatinsk and died in 1948. Zalkind loyally served the Party and the government, criticizing pedologists and their works. However, having read the new regulation of 1936 in the newspaper, he died of a heart attack on his way home.

The Reasons for the Elimination of Pedology in Russia

Pedology as a science was gradually nearing its crisis, not only because of ideological pressure from the Bolshevik Party, or drifting further away from its leading experts - Basov, Vygotsky, Lazursky, Rossolimo.

Just like any other newly emerging science, pedology had a number of unresolved methodological problems. This was stated by L. S. Vygotsky in his report during the joint meeting of psychotechnicians in 1931 (Vygotsky, 1931). Vygotsky believed radical empiricism to be the main cause of the crisis and the end of pedology in the West and in America. He believed that pedology as a single independent science of child development could only form methodologically and practically through the dialectical and materialist understanding of its subject. Vygotsky identified two criteria for defining the subject of pedology:

1. Complexity as a necessity in understanding of the inner structural processes of child development.

2. "Development" the meaning of which was interpreted by Vygotsky not from the pure genetic point of view, but as an explanatory principle, i.e. the development and its inner essence should serve as the research object of pedology (Vygotsky, 2010, p. 106).

There are different hypotheses explaining the ban of pedology as a science. According to one of them, pedology ended its existence after the death of leading pedological experts - Basov, Vygotsky, Lazursky, Rossolimo (Brushlinky, 2000; Petrovsky, 2007). Some authors assume that pedology was banned because it was led by Nadezhda Krupskaya, who was very much hated by Stalin (Abul'hanova-Slavskaya et al., 1997; Petrovsky, 2007). According to another hypothesis, pedologists tested Stalin's son, and gave his level of mental development a low score (Berezin, Mirošnikov, & Sokolova, 1994). However, these hypotheses as admitted by the authors themselves had no actual evidence. I absolutely agree with the opinion of Yaroshevsky, who said that the elimination of the entire scientific field was incorrectly explained by Stalin's whim or random circumstances of his personal life (Yaroshevsky, 1994).

All pedological institutes were closed in 1936 after the new regulation took effect and pedologists themselves were sent away. All pedological publications were destroyed. The press began an active criticism of pedology. For example, Ruskin believed that the poor level of diagnosis of children's intellectual development by unqualified pedologists resulted in the grade repetition becoming a mass phenomenon of the Soviet school. In Leningrad, in school years 1935 to 1936, around 14% of 7 to 13 year old pupils stayed behind to repeat their secondary school grades. Ruskin wrote that "the main reason for grade retention was not the poor heredity or the circumstances of life, as considered by pedologist Blonsky, but the poor educational standards of teachers themselves" (Ruskin, 1937, p. 69). However, the accusations against Blonsky were unfounded. In Blonsky's report, called "A pupil repeating a year at school" during an All-Union Congress on the study of human behaviour (1930), he specified a number of reasons for grade retention, such as: low IQ, poor health, reduced working capacity, younger age in comparison with their classmates, complex social environment. In addition, children who had been transferred from rural schools to the schools in the city were also lagging behind their peers (Blonsky, 1930, p. 377).

Blonsky suggested new directions in the fight against grade retention:

- Rationalization of the school system (the correct merger of classes, introduction to semester transfers from one class to another, etc.);
- Effective organization of work with parents and extracurricular work with children;
- Preventive measures to improve the health of a child, good nutritional regime (Blonsky, 1930, p. 378).

In my opinion, a major contributor to pedological crisis was the fact that the work of pedologists in schools suffered from significant deficiencies. A lot of pedologists had little or no adequate education, as a result of which their research was of poor quality and their test results were flawed. The idea of formation of pedology as a complex science that studied a child was ingenious; however it was lacking methodological elaboration. Even now, I believe there is a need for creating a structured science that would cover all areas of child's development as a whole. This is why I feel it is very important that we go back to the roots of the idea that laid at the base of the start of pedology and re-think, re-use and re-create its concept, which will bring benefits to our current scientific knowledge and understanding of a child at its central point.

After pedology ended its existence, its research findings in general were not utilised or implemented in any educational processes. We can relate to the main principles of pedology underlined by Petrovsky that are very current in my opinion, and can be used in the modern science.

According to Petrovsky, pedology was based on four main principles:

- The principle of the holistic approach to the study of the child, using data obtained from various sciences;
- The genetic principle, to include Vygotsky's proposed idea of the zone of proximal development;
- The principle of taking into consideration the social context, that is, the living conditions of the child;
- The principle of making a diagnosis of the level of a child's development with the purpose of providing the child and the child's parents with psychological assistance (Petrovsky, 2007, p. 32).

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to say, that many of the problems that psychologists have been trying to resolve nowadays were already present at the turn of the 20th century. The study of the history of pedology teaches a modern psychologist to have a careful attitude towards a child, taking into account his mental capabilities. In the modern world, on the one hand, no one argues with the fact that a child's psyche is versatile and, consequently, we need to create necessary conditions for its further successful development. However, on the other hand, it is also important to remember that a child's mind is not unlimited and, therefore, it needs especially careful attitude to it. Equally, this applies not only to psychology but also to many other sciences, for example Ecology, where we tend to use natural resources that are limited causing permanent damage to our planet, just like when a child is driven to perform to the great expectations of his/her parents. I think that ideas of psychologists living in the past could perhaps be a source of inspiration for our present day debates. This will teach us to avoid repeating their mistakes and remembering their achievements. That is why we need to know their names and ideas. We are living an era in which the importance of historical knowledge must be highlighted more than ever before to enable us to move forward into the future.

Notes

1) All translations from Russian are by the present author.

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