Translations, Articles and News

Sukhomlinsky News

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Work education

In this issue we continue our translation of extracts from the sixth chapter of *Pavlysh Secondary School*, which is on work education.

Considerations when organising work activities (continued from last month)

3. The role of work education in intellectual, moral, physical and aesthetic education, in polytechnical education. For young children, the aesthetic and socially useful goals of work are the most accessible. Children affirm their moral worth and take pride in the beauty of the work process and its material results. During early childhood, aesthetic feelings are one of the richest sources of moral feelings. That is why most of our work for young children has a clearly expressed aesthetic dimension: children create beauty. This determines the types of work: growing flowers and caring for them, making things whose practical value is determined mainly by their beauty and their role in satisfying aesthetic needs. Little children also try to accurately and beautifully carry out work whose purpose is not primarily aesthetic, but experimental or socially useful. We utilise children's aspiration for beauty to enrich their work philosophically and intellectually. Everything that little children do should be beautiful.

There are types of work activity and long-term work processes that, because of their content, play an important role: some in intellectual education, others in moral education, some in physical education, some in polytechnical education. The all-round development of the personality depends on the extent to which all the component elements of communist education are incorporated into work activities.

4. The correlation between intellectual and physical effort. One of the most important rules of work education is to combine intellectual and physical work. We would not allow some students to invent and bring to fruition creative ideas (such as constructing working models), while other students carry out monotonous physical work. Any idea involves some physical, monotonous, often unpleasant work, and the person to do this work should be the one who is trying to bring the idea to fruition. [Continued on the following page]

Aspects of work education

Dear readers,

This month I am continuing to translate chapter six of 'Pavlysh Secondary School'. This month's extract examines various aspects of work education, such as its place in a holistic system of education, the integration of intellectual and physical work, the application of technology, and whether work is voluntary or paid.

Sukhomlinsky placed great emphasis on the role of extracurricular activities in work education, but there were also formal work lessons at his school, which he begins to describe towards the end of this month's extract. That description will be continued next month.

As we near the end of the academic year in Australia, I hope you have weathered the challenges that the year has brought, and are able to enjoy a well-earned Christmas and New Year break.

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill

Considerations in work education (cont.)

The more simple and monotonous physical work is, the more important it is that it is not the ultimate goal, but a means for realising the ultimate goal, the creative idea. We consider one of the main preconditions for the psychological preparation of the younger generation for work is that simple work in the fields or on the animal farm should not be seen only as an application of physical effort. We seek a correlation between the work of minds and hands, so that physical work attracts young men and women as an arena for spiritual growth and development. While creating things of material value, students are at the same time researching, experimenting, studying the laws of nature and technology, perfecting technological processes. At the animal farm, where the most difficult and monotonous work is to be found, the most interesting research is being undertaken by senior students into the influence of antibiotics on vital functions in animals.

5. The tools used in work. The more complex the technology and processes involved in work, the greater the opportunities for uncovering talents and abilities, and for educating high work standards. To prepare young people to use complex technology (machines, mechanisms, installations), we involve young people in complex production processes from an early age, and especially during the middle school years, teaching them work skills appropriate for a time of rapid scientific and technological progress.

At an early age, as well as using hand tools, our students use mechanical tools, especially those driven by electricity (such as an electric bandsaw). This challenges children and leads them into the world of technology. The older the child, and the deeper their knowledge of science, the more important it is to include ever more complex technology in work processes. In this way we ensure that, from an early age, children learn to consider physical work as an opportunity to utilise machine technology. If, for example, Pioneers are requested to move several hundred kilograms of wheat from one place to another, they should ask themselves whether it is possible to use some mechanical means rather than do it by hand. If the adolescents have experience using relatively complex work technology, they will think of a way to set up a conveyer.

The more complex the work technology, the more refined the manual skills required, and the higher the standard of manual work. We educate a high standard of manual skills from an early age. Construction, assembly, the fitting of parts and assemblies, the adjustment and tuning of interacting parts and equipment, all the diverse creative work carried out over all the years of schooling, not only leads to a high level of manual skills, but also develops thinking skills. Skill in managing complex technology depends to a large extent on developing a high level of manual skills.

6. The results of work activity. Sometimes material results are created during the process of working and are obvious to the students (for example the products created by the young technicians' clubs). Sometimes, the work is a preparation for material results that will appear in the not too distant future (for example, harvesting wheat grain and preparing it for sowing). Sometimes, the work provides the conditions for results that will only appear in the comparatively distant future (for example, agricultural afforestation with a view to increasing soil fertility). Sometimes, there are no obvious

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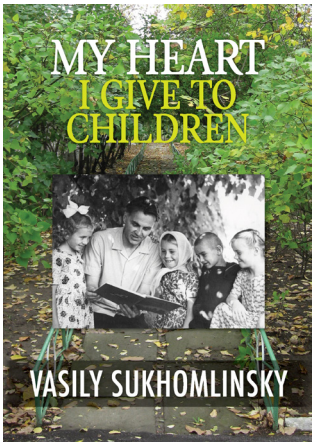

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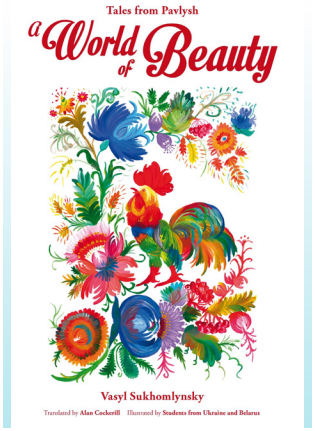

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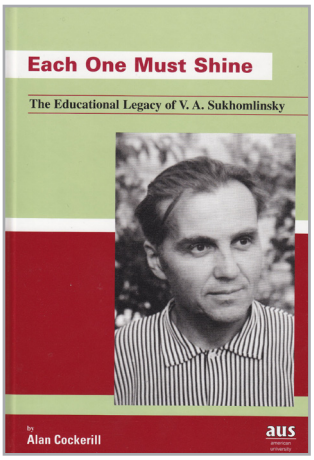

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material results at all, and the work only brings psychological benefits (for example helping an old or sick person).

The more significant the material result of the work, the greater the opportunities for forming convictions, and the deeper the feelings that accompany the work process. We plan work activity in such a way that students struggle over a lengthy period of time to gain a material result in the future, and that in this struggle they have to overcome difficulties, so that this period of struggle becomes a stage in their spiritual development. Along with short-term work assignments, there is always work in the life of the community that is calculated to last several years (growing trees, caring for a vineyard or orchard).

Sometimes the material results of work are distributed to people, and sometimes, by its very nature, there is no resulting object to be consumed. Both types of work are of equal significance educationally. Students produce goods that are for individual consumption (bread, vegetables, meat, milk), and things of value that belong to all of society (fertile soil, forest).

7. Payment. Young people are involved in two types of work activity: voluntary and paid. In planning the correlation between these two types of work, we take into consideration the deep changes that are taking place in our society. Workers receive more and more of the good things of life from public funds, independently of their own work. The proportion of such benefits in the lives of children is incomparably greater than is the case for adults, and that places a great responsibility on us as educators. Students should understand the labour value of the benefits that they receive from society free of charge. To this end we involve them in unpaid work that benefits society. The more benefits the younger generation receives that are not paid for by their own work, the more essential their unpaid work is.

But individual payments, personal wages, also have great educational value. During the summer, students in the middle and senior years who work on the collective farm receive individual payments. This is an important prerequisite for educating a feeling of duty towards one's parents. Using all the means at the school's disposal (discussions, lectures) we seek to ensure that after school, as they embark on their independent working lives, young people give a portion of their wages to their mother and father.

Teaching work skills

During their adolescence and youth, we need to give people the skills that will help them choose a profession wisely, to uncover their talents, abilities and inclinations.

Students acquire the skills required to make a wise choice of profession in two ways:

1. At the compulsory lessons dictated by the curriculum.

In the primary classes this is manual work. In grades five to seven it is work on the experimental plots and in the workshops. In grades eight to ten it is work connected with studying the foundations of basic industrial and agricultural production. Work at these compulsory lessons includes using materials (paper, cardboard, plasticine, clay, wood, fabric, metals, plastics), preparing soil and caring for plants, construction and modelling, operating machines and equipment.

A general secondary school does not have the aim of providing professional vocational training. Students graduating from secondary school should just be able to navigate their way round the main branches of production and have acquired skills that will facilitate a wise choice of profession. Elementary types of handcrafts in the primary classes are the first, important stage of instruction in work skills. The skills acquired during handcraft lessons are a prerequisite for the development of other, more complex skills that are acquired during the middle and senior years. The ability to use a fretsaw or to cut paper prepares students to work with a vice, to work metal with a file or a lathe, to construct a radio, and so on. In grades one and two, our children use metal blades to cut paper into lace patterns, to cut out wooden models of machines, and the figures of people and animals. This work develops the ability to measure by eye, persistence, and an appreciation of beauty. The children weave and knit little toy bags, purses, and chairs from straw, and mould the figures of people and animals from plasticine and clay.

Along with the simplest hand crafts, children in the primary classes learn to construct and to model, to assemble and take apart toy models of equipment and machines. Work is combined with elements of play. Construction and modelling begin with the use of soft metal wire and plastic disks. The children make wire figures of animals, and then progress to models of tractors, cars, aeroplanes, cranes, excavators, transporters. Using wooden, metal, clay and plastic parts, disks and blocks, they construct models of houses and industrial structures. As they get used to working with wood, more and more parts are prepared using glue. At some lessons, children prepare figures of people and animals using papier mache.

[To be continued next month.]

Stories

Mum sent me

Some boys were playing with a ball in the meadow. Igor boasted, 'I can throw the straightest!'
The other boys laughed, 'Don't brag, Igor.'
But Igor wanted to prove he was the most accurate. He said, 'You see that white shirt hanging in that yard? I'll hit it with the ball.'
It was Grandma Yarina's yard. She lived next door to Igor. Igor threw the ball and hit the shirt, leaving a black spot on it.
Grandma Yarina saw who threw the ball and went to Igor's mother to complain.
When Igor came home, his mother already knew about his mischief. She told Igor, 'Grandma Yarina is old, and it is difficult for her to wash clothes. She washed her shirts and put them out to dry, and you dirtied one. Now she has to wash it again…
Igor stood hanging his head.
'Go to Grandma Yarina and ask her forgiveness,' she said.
Igor went next door to Grandma Yarina's house, approached her, and stood sulking.
'What do you want to say, Igor?' asked grandma Yarina.
'Mum sent me to ask your forgiveness.'
Grandma Yarina looked at the boy without saying anything. Then she sighed deeply and went inside.

The baby crow and the nightingale

A crow had a single baby bird, a baby crow. The mother crow loved her baby, and fed it nice, tasty worms.
But one day, the crow went looking for food and disappeared. The sun rose higher than the tree where the crows lived, and still the mother had not appeared. The baby crow began to cry. It cried so much that its tears poured in a stream onto the ground. Many birds living in the forest fell silent because they were sorry for the poor chick.
A nightingale heard the baby crow's cries. Its heart was moved with pity. The nightingale left its nest and flew to baby crow's nest, settled beside the baby crow, and began to sing its wonderful song. Even the wind settled down and listened.
But the baby crow seemed not to hear the nightingale's song, wailing and choking on its tears.
Then suddenly the baby crow heard its mother's voice in the distance: 'Caw! Caw!' The baby crow stopped crying instantly and said to the nightingale, 'Can you hear, that's my mother singing. Be quiet, please, and stop squeaking.'
'Caw! Caw-caw!' sounded out quite close, and the nightingale fell silent. It flew to a neighbouring tree and fell to thinking… That night the forest did not hear the nightingale's song.

Why does Grandpa Maksim wake up so early?

For forty-two years Grandpa Maksim worked driving steam engines. For forty-two years his working day began very early. He rose at five o'clock, travelled to the railway station, climbed into the steam engine and hauled a train to a distant city. He did not return home until five o'clock in the evening.

Now Grandpa Maksim has retired. In the morning he does not have to hurry anywhere. His grandson Roman, who is in grade five, envies his grandfather. He says, 'Gee you're lucky grandpa! You can sit on your bench all day… You don't have to go to school or learn lessons…'

'You think I'm lucky?' snorts Grandpa Maksim. 'Wait till you get to my age, and then see how lucky you feel.'

It is five o'clock in the morning. Grandpa cannot sleep. He gets up. Very quietly, so as not to disturb anyone, he gets dressed, goes outside, and sits on his bench. The train that he always used to catch to the station pulls up. It toots, as if calling Grandpa Maksim. The old man sighs and for a long time he watches the line of green carriages disappearing into the distance.

Grandpa Maksim sits motionless on the bench for an hour or two.

Roman, meanwhile, really does not want to get out of bed and go to school….