

**PADOMJU IDEOLOĢIJAS MANTOJUMS MŪSDIENU
AUDZINĀŠANĀ ĢIMENĒ LATVIJĀ**

***Heritage of the Soviet Ideology in parenting nowadays:
the case of Latvia***

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Abstract. *The Soviet period has shaped the history of Latvia in different areas. This article offers an insight into the ideological heritage which has significantly transformed the pedagogical discourse in theoretical as well as instrumental level.*

Article describes a part of two researches “Social transformations of the child's image in children's room” and “Father`s Pedagogical Competence in Family Nowadays”, revealing common features characterizing Soviet issues. Narrative explores crucial systemic changes, transformation of social and family life, deals with the deformed relationship between individuals in public sphere and family members in private and shows consequences still actual nowadays, pointing out the question of gendered and “Sovietized” identities.

Keywords: *Soviet ideology, gender roles in family, parenting, father`s discourse, child`s image, child`s room*

“A sacred duty of every family and all parents is to develop in their children immense loyalty to the communist ideals, deep hatred to the capitalist world and its remnants, which are still existing in people`s consciousness.” /Ūsiņš, 1964/

Introduction

The concept of the article is based on two researches representing the evolution of socio-historical changes in Latvia determining transformation of pedagogical aspects. The one deals with the intervention of the Soviet ideology in the child`s room and the other enlightens historical changes in the phenomenon of father`s pedagogical competence. These two areas reflect the influence of the state to people relationship in general and the problematic of family in micro level. Both of the studies try to reveal the Soviet heritage in the pedagogical context of nowadays. One of the focuses discussed further is to understand the social situation, circumstances and the following effect that is still present in Latvia today.

Qualitative approach has been selected to carry out both researches and the interpretational paradigm integrated helps to implement the study of extended social contexts, identities and relations of authorities. Both researches are carried out, displaying the research questions into public – social and private – family, individual levels. Method helping to reveal the public level is the analysis of the secondary pedagogical literature and socio-linguistic analysis of the printed pedagogical media: „*Skola un Ģimene*” (“*School & Family*”).

One of the existing powers forming public opinion about the norms of gender and standards is media. Mass media represent the dominating opinions that “help” individuals and separate groups to develop their life conception, convictions, habits and values concerning other individuals and groups, getting the idea of how social reality functions. That is the reason why the Soviet public discourse in both researches is uncovered through media analysis.

Media has always been a remarkable power in the state, but it especially maximized in the Soviet context. Mass media became a serious weapon of propaganda and the mechanism of social control. All the narrative was permeated with political ideology and strictly censored as well. Pedagogical press was overfilled by directions and instructions what should be a “perfect” family like, what is like to educate children in the spirit of socialism, what should be done by parents to improve their upbringing skills.

The narrative is analyzed disclosing the change of hegemonic discursive practices characterizing socio-pedagogical issues. Discourse agents revealing the private sphere are parents – mothers and fathers – describing their experience, opinion and position in parenting and upbringing.

In each media separately and the interview material together the hegemonic discourses have been initially identified and gradually the process of their development, causes and effects have been interpreted, disclosing the transformations of man, woman, father, child and mother’s identities in the time-space.

Related historico-pedagogical problematic and conclusions integrated into both researches are successively disclosed in 6 subchapters.

Characterization of the Soviet ideology in the context of Latvia

It is important to understand the historical context to study consequences and interpret all the implementations. The annexation of the Republic of Latvia in 1940 initiated rapid political, economic and ideological changes in all social structures. Ongoing repressive transformations were based with watchword of well-being and harmony, conception of abstract socialism. Illusion of rapid progress was advocated in this period (Šneidere, 2004; Ivanovs, 2004).

National system changes to “developed mature socialism” (the first phase of the development of communism) was oriented achieving the highest ideal of communism where violent replacement of existing system was realized (Zīle, 1980; PSKP Programma, 1986).

All ongoing processes in the society were looked out through the matrix of the ideology of communism. The everyday life was realized according to the dictate of the Soviet system – its rules and regime demands.

The precondition of the communist ideology was to carry out the changes in several levels appropriate to the totalitarian system as soon as possible.

Demands dictated by the Communist Party were included in the reorganization of system of society and individual human life.

Three aims were included in the introduction and consolidation of the ideology of the Soviet period:

- to create materially technical basis of the communism;
- to consummate and to transform the social relations in the society;
- to create the new forms of human upbringing regarding to the ideology of communism society;
- to develop human`s attitude to work;
- to develop holistic and harmonic human. (PSKP Programma, 1986)

To reach and to realize above mentioned tasks, the basis of the socialism was implemented:

(1) in mass media where tasks were actualized and induced advisable resonance in the society;

(2) in schools which provided ideologically appropriate learning process;

(3) in families which were responsible for the children upbringing in the spirit of the communism. In reality responsibility of parenting was the task for the whole society, thus praxis and norms of propaganda were legitimated and realized. (Lewin & Elliott, 2005; Flugins, 1964)

The process of the ideologization of the society was implemented in all its levels. It was determining an attitude, values and behavior in the individual and collective levels. The social relationships were reorganized according to the ideal of the moral consciousness of the communism society. (Plakans, 2011; Pavlovičs, 2012)

The main task of the communication system was to establish utopian confidence that people live in the society in which the highest target is to care about well-being of human. There were necessities for the belief of human that existing situation is the best of possible and it`s going to the absolute perfection in the future.

The newly created social system and ideology which based in philosophy was considered to be a prerequisite of the implementation of social progress and was announced as axiomatic – the Marxism-Leninism theory – stating that the main factor determining the system of ideas in social and political life, person`s attitudes to existence and mutual relationship in the society is an economic situation. (Karpovics, 1968)

These statements defined necessity for reformation of the life of society and human life, orienting human to the manufacturing as the primary value.

Newborn “Soviet culture” and collective system, which component was every single person (Karpovics, 1968), influenced the change of accents and orientation of the upbringing certainly. One of the obvious features was the prevalence of a mentoring, for example, both in family and in the institutions of education.

Typical features of the Soviet period were the focus on public production, centralization of systemic processes, motive of collectivism, substitution of religion by scientific atheism and the (non)implemented gender equality, which were propagated by the Communist Party.

Doctrines of totalitarianism propagated prohibition of the individuals' autonomy, which was actually even needless, because there were formulated rules and regulations as strictly accomplishable.

Analysis of the social situation and ruling ideology of the Soviet period allows making conclusions about totalitarian implications in general, which have transformed and deformed interaction of people and has significantly influenced the understanding about child, family and parenting.

“Sovietized” interpretation of gender in public area

Gender topic is one of the popular research issues regarding the period of Soviet Power. The study of changes in gender construction and social status in the Soviet ideological system in the historical perspective is one of dimensions in the mentioned researches. Although the gender question was officially masked by the slogan of so called “Soviet equality”, it is still especially topical when the problematic of that time is discussed.

It has to be stressed that the discourse contains contrasts, dual views and falsification of reality in all spheres of social life. Although in the ideological aspect the reorganization of gender relations and family model have been declared the main aims, patriarchal traditions are still characteristic of the soviet gender system. Despite the slogans of equality they have still partially remained until today.

One of the main tasks were reformation of interrelation of man and women, women's participation in paid employment and “the voluntary enforcement” of Soviet citizens to become equal in private and public sphere in general (Iljina, 1971). These were progressive ideas in theory, but became an absurd in practice. Ideological standards were set to determine desideratum image of the man and woman in society. There were new norms and understanding about gender typical and appropriate behaviour, social status and role models created in the context of the rule of the Soviet dictate.

The construction of woman-mother's public and private image reveals an antagonistic view. A woman, who was equally employed in a paid job, was still considered to be primarily responsible for children's upbringing, which could be explained with a “naturally” higher level of pedagogical competence than that of a man. Such a situation discriminated women in fact, in spite of propagated gender revolution. A specific, the so called “can do everything” type of woman/mother had been created, which monopolized woman's position in family life. The conviction that women can “easily” and “naturally” merge the sphere of family and work increased. (Zelče, 2003) In spite of propagated

conviction media discourse reveals two types of women: the one is attributed to work life and the other is self-denying and exemplary mother. (Seļezņovs, 1978) It was quite difficult, but also beneficial for man to accept that kind of situation, but looking deeply it actually mostly kept the existing positions unchanged for men. Main leaders in the political arena and authorities in other public spheres were still basically men. Leaders as well as soviet citizens were glorified all over (Ārente, 2000; Kaprāns, 2012). It created the discourse of hyperbolization in which women were portrayed as perfect housewives and workers as well and men – perfect leaders, colleagues and supporters to Soviet women. Soviet Relationship between both genders is characterized as harmonic and respectful (Studente, 1982). “The new Soviet world” should be as a mechanism of a clock, which works “accurately”, because every detail takes its place. That enlightens the official and imaginary public level, but doesn’t not uncover the practical area, which surcharge women, but lobby certain men privileges like unequal segregation and prestige in the sector of employment.

Family in the Soviet discourse

The other realistic side of the public imitation of the „progressive emancipation” was seen in family.

A quotation from a manual for senior high-school students „Family” gives a brilliant description of a Soviet family. In the stage of a developed socialism, the Communist Party considers family to be the „basic cell”, i.e., a micro model, that in it’s daily life is subjected to the implementation of socially responsible tasks and activities – the members of which not only live together and manage the household, but are also responsible for social production, renewal of it’s quantitative and qualitative contents, and active and correct upbringing of the new members of the socialist society (Studente, 1982).

Soviet message was declared in the form of slogans in all social spheres, but one of the first-string pathos was especially devoted to the institute of family. It was saturated with high morality standards in rhetoric, but uncovered the substitution of humaneness, tendencies of equality, provision of well-being with categorical and unconditional dictatorship in practice. Family had to be perfect, because it was universalized and set as a symbol of nation unity. Every smallest Soviet unit was considered to be the part of a big “immortal” collective family (Miķelsons, 1964). Every individual family as “the basis of communistic upbringing” and the active agent of discourse was responsible for calling into being socialist ideals. The desideratum model of the family, the image of a man and women in society, mother`s and father`s roles in family was defined by the “codex of socialism” (Ļubļinska, 1967). Media narrative as well as pedagogical literature discovers a family as a separate platform of discourse, which describes it`s definition, meaning, functions and transformations in the dynamics of time. Family had to be `new-built`, different from the old one, denying all bourgeois features of

patriarchal society. The socialistic family consisted of married reproductive man and women, who were treated as equal and shared responsibilities of the household according to abilities. 'The Soviet family' was materially and morally assured collective, *“not a simple family, but excellent, organized, friendly collective, which is based on love and support of all it's members”* (Makarenko, 1952). It reveals the specific normative regulation of optimism as the hegemonic form of discourse. It was not allowable to confess that the perfect system has it's foibles. Everyone had to look happy, pleased and grateful. One of the eye-witnesses in his interview told that everything was polished and artificial in public, but there were lots of discrimination, gender and status different actions in the backstage. For the sake of appearances and trustworthiness there were some bad examples analyzed sometimes. It was done in order to show the bad illustration of the people who haven't implemented socialistic paradigm yet and to provoke fear of the eventual condemnation.

In accordance with the interviews with mothers and fathers telling about their childhood experience, family was not confined and autonomous at that time. In the name of propagated collective responsibility, everyone could express their opinion: neighbors as well as colleagues, and it actually turned into denunciation (Plakans, 2011).

Soviet ideology entered the family and influenced the relationship and upbringing of a child and even arrangement of it's room through the officially accepted literature on practical and pedagogical advice and through the few censored media – radio and TV that gave guidelines on the necessary roles, attitudes, furniture and toys advisable for the child's living space, as well as suitable taste and values to ensure the formation of ideologically „correct” views and mindsets.

Implemented totalitarian form of governance and socialistic ideology propagated alongside deformed people relationship, which was reflected in the life of the whole society and especially in family (Iljina, 1971).

Parenting as an agency of private discourse

The role of parents was difficult and multidimensional, because their task was to obey the ruling ideology and correspond properly to it's demands from the one side and to bring up children daily from the other side. The style and methods of child's upbringing was not the private choice of a family, but state guided and controlled collective activity that was directed to the formation of the identity of the „new type of man”. Upbringing of a politically loyal citizen conformable to communist ideals at a state level was started from the first days of child's life, but parents and teachers were responsible for the development of child's experience conforming to the ideological requirements (Makarenko, 1952). Analysis of parent's role in the family uncover them as a mediators between private and public spheres of life.

This discourse initiates the discussion about the ideal of upbringing and appropriate methods to accomplish. The Soviet pedagogy determines comprehensively and harmonically developed personality as an aim of an upbringing: a person who is ready for the work, defense of the Homeland and is loyal and able to integrate into collective and perform all social activities adequately (Zelmenis, 1978). The statement is meaningful in theory, but malformed in practice. Although the statements of Soviet upbringing had to be a powerful accelerator on the way to social well-being, the existing environment did not give any chance to fulfill these objectives. Desirable 'Soviet approach to parenting' was discussed widely, but contained contradictive discourses. In order to educate children as conscientious and hard-working builders of communism, parents had to destroy and fight against bourgeois features, which preached the authoritarian style of parenting as the best. However the description of 'the Soviet approach to parenting' included limited and marginal facilities of choice and freedom, which actually described the same authoritarian style. Still like in the Interwar period, the family relations were constructed considering the standards of patriarchal society and the family model corresponded to the traditional. There was a choice offered from appropriate and considered to be right things only. Strict order and regime were determined as methods of upbringing and discipline was set as a mandatory result of the qualitatively realized process (Zelmenis, 1978; Makarenko, 1952). Obedience was regarded as "hidden" but ultimate target overall. A special significance was attributed to labour education. It was related to the level of culture and values orientation (Studente, 1982). It was considered that education and upbringing through work was the best instrument to reach the standards of perfectionism. Parents were still the main people who took responsibility to control the accomplishment of objectives, which is why they have to comply certain standards to be the best for the job of socialistic upbringing. As well as the result of upbringing – parents had to be perfect (Iljina, 1971).

All these doctrines actually uncovered the public and private level, which were very antagonistic and disclosed the practice of hypocrisy. The real situation is explored in parent's interviews, which show that the daily family life did not match the hyperbolized demands.

Obvious contradictions were represented in gender issues both public and private area. Propagated gender equality was not reflected in family. Women types described in previous subchapters prompt to think that women is portrayed as irreplaceable, which monopolized woman's position in family life, thus in fact excluding father from participation in children's care and upbringing, as well as actualizing devaluation of father/man's authority in the private sphere – family. The ideological double-sided man/father's archetype also highlighted patterns of masculinity typical of the period of Soviet Power. On the one hand, the necessity for greater inclusion according to the ideal of involved and careful father as represented by political leaders was postulated in the form of slogans.

However, on the other hand, the view was propagated that no one could substitute mother in children's upbringing thus making a conclusion, that there was no necessity for making "excessively" high demands to father. The Soviet period created a definite name, as well as the type of masculinity with corresponding contextual meaning – "soviet father" prescribing that a man was mainly responsible for fulfilling economic commitment to his wife and children, but in fact not participating in the real process of child's upbringing or retaining a distant position (Avotiņš, 1967). Thus the tradition about the division of roles in the family existing already for centuries had in fact been continued.

In the period of Soviet Power the typology of fathers also represents the correlation between the real and imaginary highlighting two types of fathers. In the official discourse father is identified as 'the representative of patriarchal power in family', which relates to the patriarchal archetype of the Interwar period. In its turn the socio-cultural situation of that time initiated the development of a new type of father – 'assistant who has lost his authority' representing the real dimension. Mother was considered naturally more competent in child's upbringing therefore father's involvement was almost unimportant. On the one hand man in the family was discriminated, but on the other hand in fact his irresponsibility was purposefully facilitated, which to some extent was also "convenient" for father.

Parents had to become gender equal overnight, but that was obviously utopian idea.

Functions of parents also complicated their desire to protect children from the influence of the political ideology. One of mothers says that everything has to be done secretly. It was difficult for an adult person to hide it, but it was almost impossible to teach a child how to counterfeit – not telling what was happening or discussed at home.

Memories of respondents about their child rooms also do not testify about the soviet life style that was glorified by the official media but they told about the daily life that revealed the real soviet situation. The interviews confirm that the Soviet regime was not accepted in reality, the families just tried to adapt to the demands set by the requirements of the official ideology. One of respondents remembers: *"I had composed a poem about Lenin, and I climbed on the table to recite it. And could not understand why my mother was not exactly happy about it."* Other respondent claims that from the first day of his life he had lived in the independent Latvia: *„My grandfather was a passionate patriot of the independent Latvia, as well as all the relatives. We didn't have any Soviet ideology at home at all."* Parents did not talk to their children about Soviet ideology, but indicated what they should and should not talk publicly. For instance, parents listened secretly, under blanket, radio *Luxemburg* or *Voice of America*, or celebrated the officially banned Christmas or Easter on the sly, but children knew that they were not allowed to talk about it at school or kindergarten.

The same relates to the non-existence of private property and class free society. In reality the deficit or „blata” system worked, which was used by the parents that had important and privileged jobs, and who could provide their children with better living conditions. Female respondent tells how she and her sister were going to the shop to buy a deficit or „blata” doll – *“my uncle was a Soviet officer, and he had the privileges to buy goods that other people couldn’t get.”* Other respondent reveals the restricted possibilities to buy food: *„we were not allowed to eat anything without permission. In Soviet times you could not simply go to the fridge and have what you found there, because one could not just go to the shop and buy anything he wanted.”*

Only one respondent could not remember that she had shortage of anything under the Soviet rule – neither food, clothing nor information, and this just testifies to the special status of her family in Soviet hierarchy and inequality in general.

Social transformations of the child`s image

Dual view was also reflected in the discourse of child`s image. It had to fulfil the dream about “the happy Soviet childhood” from the one hand, but, what is more important: children had to be `comfortable` and controllable on the other hand. Political leaders who sacredly believed in the idea of socialism saw the future in children. This is why the main objective of upbringing was obedience. Pedagogical literature and media narrative represents child`s well-being. But it was considered that polite, obedient, virtuous, responsible and successful child could not be unhappy, because he has all the “potential” given by socialism. That was also a matter of prestige – Soviet Union wanted to be proud of it`s children. All the achievement accomplished was in the praise of political leaders and fatherland. Delegation of autonomy was treated to be a threat of becoming an egoist and promotion of consumer society. A child was viewed more like resource and less than objective and personality.

Conclusions

A holistic statement which generally concludes the opinion about the heritage of the Soviet power influencing society, family and individual refers to a mighty falsification in all levels. The actual discourse in family life and parenting include contrasts and dual views to reality in all social spheres of life.

The aim of the Soviet ideologists was to reduce the privacy as well as that of the family, however in reality it was exactly the place where people in Soviet Latvia tried to escape the pressure of Soviet ideology – things that they could not express and show in public space found their expression in the private space – their homes. Thus achieving exactly the opposite to the intentions of the Soviet power – private space became the oasis of escape not the instrument of Soviet ideology.

Contrary to the propagated statement, that a “strong” family is one of the most important values in the Soviet Union, in many spheres the political power degraded the significance and even disarmed family in fact.

The fact that traditional concepts are still deeply rooted in the historical experience of the society explains why in the society of Latvia man’s social and gender identity is formed by the status of a person who has to provide for the family whereas woman has been delegated with the role of taking care of home and looking after children. Such conceptions have developed historically in the course of years retaining the usual practice and cultivating opinions about roles, occupation and physical characteristics typical of the gender.

Many of stereotypes cultivated in the period of Soviet power are still present. Even nowadays stereotypes of society reveal the generally accepted activities, ways of behavior and models of thinking. Having analyzed the results of studies carried out in Latvia, it is possible to conclude that the public opinion is still influenced by typical and normative stereotypes – views that are based on prejudices and suppositions about qualities typical of men and women and their “appropriate” behavior.

Latvia faces the problem that stereotyping effects the style of upbringing and parenting even nowadays. The main reason is that conceptions are predominantly the result of automatic adoption of opinion and production of prejudices, which are not rooted in personal understanding, but are based on simplified, standardized perception and uncritical judgments. Such conceptions have a tendency to be stable and hard to change. It can be clearly related to the approaches of parenting, conceptions about ideals of upbringing and ways of achieving that.

Both researches show that despite of the transformative tendencies became topical during the recovery and strengthening of the independence of the statehood of Latvia especially in the framework of processes concerning accession to the Europe, it is still very difficult to disregard the heritage of the Soviet past fully.

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