

Sukhomlinsky News

No. 60
August 2020



What is work education?

Dear readers,

This month I am continuing to translate extracts from 'Pavlysh Secondary School', but have moved on from the chapter on intellectual education to the chapter on work education.

In 'Pavlysh Secondary School' Sukhomlinsky outlines his holistic approach to education by examining it under several headings: health and physical education, moral education, intellectual education, work education, and aesthetic education. These are not separate subjects in the curriculum, but various aspects of an integrated process that encompassed all subjects.

As we move from chapter to chapter in Sukhomlinsky's book, we are often looking at the same activities from the perspective of the various educational objectives. Physical education, moral education, intellectual education, work education and aesthetic education are all combined and integrated in a single process, but it is helpful to examine each in a separate chapter, as each also represents an educational goal.

Work education as Sukhomlinsky understands it appears to be largely absent from an Australian curriculum that is heavily weighted towards development of the intellect.

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill

Work education

In this issue we begin translating extracts from the sixth chapter of *Pavlysh Secondary School*, which is on work education. Work education was an integral part of soviet secondary education at the time, which had a 'polytechnical' orientation. Soviet educators were tasked with preparing their students for participation in the workforce, and during the 1950s and 1960s most jobs were still to be found in manufacturing and agriculture.

Principles of work education

Work education is the practical preparation of the younger generation for participation in social production and at the same time an extremely important element in moral, intellectual, and aesthetic education. Our teaching staff are working to create a system of work education in which work gives shape to the moral and intellectual temper of the personality. We see our educational task as being to ensure that work should become part of the spiritual life of the person we are educating, of the life of the community, that enthusiastic involvement in work should already have become an important interest during the years of adolescence and early youth.

Our activity in the field of work education is based on the following principles:

1. **Work education is part of a person's overall development: moral, intellectual, aesthetic, and physical.**

Work only becomes an educating force when it enriches people's intellectual lives, adding content of great variety to students' intellectual and creative interests, when it inspires moral integrity and elevates the aesthetic beauty of the individual and the community.

[Continued on the following page]

Principles of work education (cont.)

A person's harmonious, all-round development—their education, spiritual wealth, and moral purity—all these things are only achieved when, along with intellectual, moral, aesthetic and physical development, a person attains a high level of work culture and creativity in work. In the concept of 'work culture' we include not only the perfection of practical skills and abilities, the level of mastery achieved thanks to the training and skilful supervision of work by elders. That is just one aspect of work. The essence of work culture is the place that work activity occupies in a person's spiritual life, the extent to which creativity in work is full of intellectual challenges, moral significance, and civic purpose. Work culture implies a level of spiritual development a person reaches when they cannot live without working for the common good, when work fills their lives with moral inspiration, and spiritually enriches the life of the community.

2. A person's individuality should be discovered and developed in work.

Work will only become a source of joy when a person sees something more significant in it than just gaining the means to satisfy their material needs. They need to find in it creativity, the unfolding of their abilities and talents. Our ideal of work education consists in each person, in adolescence and youth, finding that work in which their natural talents may find the fullest and most vibrant expression, which will give them the happiness of creativity. When analysing a student's readiness for working life, we consider what they are able to contribute to society, and what their work will add to their spiritual lives, the extent to which their strengths and abilities will unfold as they find success in work.

3. Work should have moral significance and benefit society.

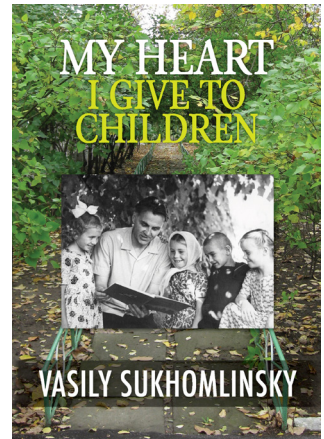
We seek to ensure that children are motivated to work by a desire to benefit society. Consequently we prioritise the involvement of children in work that benefits the nation (increasing soil fertility; planting belts of woodland to protect fields against erosion, planting grapevines and orchards; participating in the construction of school and community facilities and roads). Such work for society, for the future, provides the children with a type of moral conditioning. Those who take social interests to heart in childhood and adolescence, develop a sense of honour and duty. Their conscience does not permit them to be indifferent when it is a question of social values.

We do not rush to involve children in paid work. That can inculcate self-interest and greed for money. Before receiving their first payment for work, students should acquire significant moral experience with voluntary work that provides significant material benefits to society. Money that is paid for the collective work of students is spent, in accordance with the wishes of the students themselves, on satisfying the material and spiritual needs of members of the group. In childhood, adolescence, and early youth, we show young people the highest beauty of life: serving society with one's work. Hundreds of instances, hundreds of young lives, have convinced us that the more effort a person has dedicated to voluntary work for society in childhood, adolescence, and youth, the more deeply they take to heart matters that do not appear to have any direct personal relationship to them.

We also see the great moral significance of work in the fact that its material results represent

 **REALLY GOOD
BOOK SHOP**

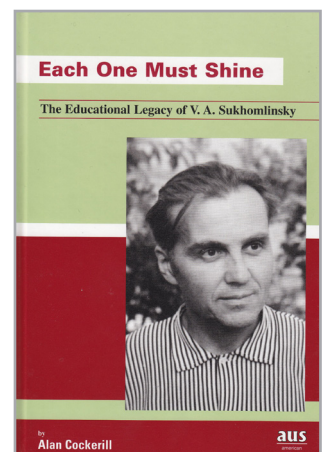
<http://www.thereallygoodbookshop.com.au/>



AUS\$24.95



AUS\$14.95



AUS\$34.95

All the above titles are also available from Amazon, The Book Depository, and other major online retailers.

an investment of intelligence, skill, selfless love for the work, and willingness to pass on their experience to their friends. We try to ensure that in their work children experience a sense of honour and pride in their success.

4. Early involvement in productive work.

Before understanding the social significance of work, a child should feel that it is impossible to live without work, that work gives joy, and a rich spiritual life. We strive to ensure that work enters children's spiritual lives at an early age. Analysing the work processes in our productive environment, we identify those that reveal to children the social and creative significance of work in a way that is clear, visible and comprehensible, and convinces them that they are participating in the creation of things of value to society. The children experience feelings of pride and honour, and work becomes a part of their spiritual lives.

The overwhelming majority of jobs in agricultural production can provide avenues for child participation. At our school children of seven and eight years of age already carry out interesting and engaging work of considerable social significance. By established tradition, certain types of work are performed only by children. For instance, two months before they commence grade one, the little ones collect seeds from trees. In the spring they perform their first work of major social significance: sowing the seeds of trees on the slopes of ravines and gullies. Then they look after the young trees, thus creating defensive wooded belts preventing soil erosion in the fields. The work of the smallest pupils in the fields of the local collective farm has created several major defensive forest belts which, over the course of ten years, have prevented soil erosion on an area of 160 hectares. It would be hard to place too high a value on the

public wealth saved due to this action, which is augmented by the subsequent work of the very same pupils during their middle school and senior years: each hectare of fertile soil returned to productive use will give a harvest for many years.

Seven-year-old children lay out nurseries and raise young fruit trees. Caring for fruit trees continues throughout adolescence and early youth. The little children take great interest in work, knowing that the results of older students' activity are to some extent dependent on it. They are allocated a small area of infertile, abandoned land, several dozen square metres in size, and over several years they transform the soil to make it highly fertile. At harvest time children aged seven or eight collect the best ears of wheat and keep the seed until spring. The little ones are particularly inspired by this work, as the quality of the seeds they collect (these seeds are sown in spring by their older friends) contributes to the quality of the harvest on the experimental plots.

At the age of eight or nine our students cultivate hybrid seeds of wheat, sunflowers, sugar beet, and maize, or combine in groups to care for young animals, and prepare food for stock. The fact that this simple work is connected with research, experimentation, and creativity, has enormous educational significance.

The early involvement of children in working with various materials (wood, metal etc.) using machinery is especially valuable. This is a whole area of work education in itself.

5. Variety in the types of work.

Children naturally seek change, rotation, and the combination of two or three types of work activity, each having their own distinguishing characteristics, specific operations and skills. The same child who enthusiastically grows plants on the experimental plot or in the greenhouse, and

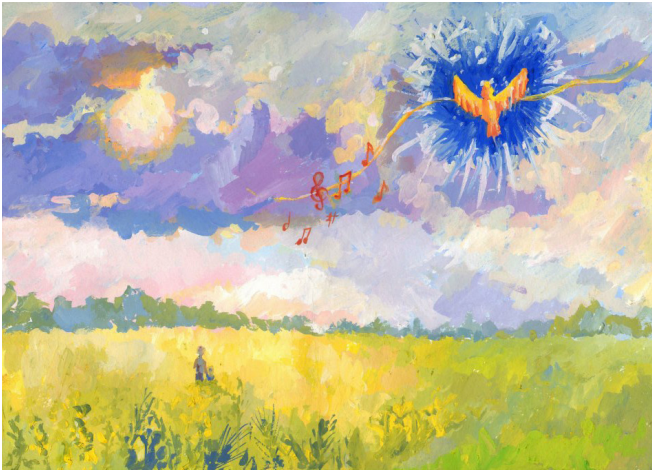
looks after animals, takes no less pleasure in working in a club for young technicians or expressing themselves through artistic creativity. Children find satisfaction in varied activities and in novelty.

Participating simultaneously in two or three types of work, each student develops various abilities and skills. Of the 260 students who graduated from our school over the past four years, 102 participated in two clubs throughout their school years, 89 in three clubs, 44 in four clubs, and 24 in five clubs. Many of them were just as enthusiastic about growing wheat, fruit trees and grapes, as they were about constructing radio sets, making working models of machines and equipment, learning to operate an internal combustion engine, or operating metal working machine tools. Many moved from club to club, taking an interest in new forms of work.

Interest in a variety of work is maintained in the senior years. A student learning how to operate a tractor in the young mechanics club also takes interest in learning about electronics and biochemistry in clubs devoted to those subjects. The variety of work that senior students participate in is an important precondition for their making wise career choices.

It is quite unacceptable to force a child to join a particular club or workgroup, just as monotony in work is unacceptable. The more varied their work is in adolescence and early youth, the more wisely young men and women choose a career, and the more clearly their individual interests are displayed.





Stories

Mum does not like fried mushrooms

On Sunday Dmitrik went with his mother to the forest.

It was early autumn and it was quiet in the forest. Somewhere in a thicket a woodpecker was knocking. The first yellow leaves were falling from the maples.

There were many mushrooms in the forest. Mum had brought a basket from home, and from time to time she bent to pick an aromatic white mushroom. Dmitrik also wanted to help his mother, but for some reason he rarely spotted a mushroom.

They returned home at midday. Mum cleaned and washed the mushrooms and began to fry them in a frying pan. It smelt so good in the room that Dmitrik began to salivate. He waited impatiently for the mushrooms to fry.

At last they were ready. Mum dished up the mushrooms on a plate. Dmitrik began to eat.

'Oh, they're so good!' he said, 'But why aren't you eating, mum?'

'I don't like fried mushrooms,' she said quietly.

'So what mushrooms do you like?'

'In the forest...'

A week later mum's brother, Dmitrik's uncle, came to visit from a distant town. He brought many tasty things: fish, caviar, continental sausage. Mum spread everything out on the table. Dmitrik had never eaten anything so tasty.

'Don't you like sausage either, mum?' he asked.

'No, I don't,' answered his mother quietly.

She forgot...

Alyonka has only her mother: no father, no grandmother, no brother or sister.

Her mother's birthday is on the first of May. How could she possibly forget that day?

Long before her birthday, Alyonka would prepare a present for her mother. She would draw

something nice in a little exercise book—a flower, a bird or an ear of wheat—and she would write: 'Happy Birthday, Mum!'

But this year something bad happened.

Alyonka's teacher asked her to learn a poem by heart and recite it at the pioneer celebration for May Day.

Alyonka was so focused on the poem that she did not notice her mother's birthday creeping up.

The next day was the birthday, and she only remembered it the evening before. She suddenly remembered and blushed with shame. She looked over at her mother. Her mother was sitting at the table, quiet and thoughtful, looking out the window.

Alyonka took her drawing album and coloured pencils and went to school. There was no-one there, just the caretaker sitting in the corridor.

Alyonka sat at her desk and began to draw. She spent a long time drawing a blue sky above a wide field. In the sky a lark was singing, and the sun was shining.

The girl finished her drawing and went home. Her mother was still sitting at the table

Alyonka showed her mother her album with the drawing, and said, 'Happy Birthday, Mum!'

And she kissed her mother.

Her mother smiled with joy.

Let's make grandpa's bed

Five-year-old Yura has a father, a mother, and grandpa Nikolai.

In the morning dad goes to work, grandpa sets off on his morning walk, and mum says to Yura, 'Let's go and make grandpa's bed.'

They go and take the feather mattress cover from grandpa's bed, beat it in the fresh air, and put it back on the bed.

Yura really likes this job: now grandpa will sleep comfortably on his bed and smile in his sleep.

One day Yura and his father travelled to a distant island on the Dnieper. They left at dawn, walked around the island all day and returned home late in the evening.

They had supper and went to bed. In the middle of the night Yura's mother heard Yura crying and found him sitting up in bed.

'What's the matter, Yura?' asked his mother anxiously.

'We didn't make grandpa's bed today?'

'No, we didn't, but it's only one day... Nothing will happen,' his mother consoled him.

'Grandpa will be uncomfortable... You said he's got old bones, and he was wounded on the frontline...'

His mother had trouble reassuring him.

The next day they made grandpa's bed twice: once in the morning and once in the afternoon.