Oleksandr MIHNO
Academy of Pedagogic Sciences of Ukraine, Ukraine

Vasyl Sukhomlynsky on Psychological and Educational Characteristics of Student's Personality

(Dedicated to the 95th Anniversary of Vasyl Sukhomlynsky's Birthday)

Modern humanistic dominant in education determines axiological nature of pedagogy and forms its fundamental direction – pedagogical anthropology, which is based on understanding of the nature, the human being and the nature of education. Anthropological approach, constituting one of the main axioms of education since its inception, appears in the works of many teachers of the past (Mykolay Pirogov, Konstantyn Ushinsky, Janusz Korczak et al.), but only Vasyl Sukhomlynsky raised it to the level of the main goal of education.

In writings and experience of Vasyl Sukhomlynsky (1918–1970) a careful researcher can discover traces of the anthropological approach. Suhomlynsky devoted his life to transforming school into „moral sanatorium" (Janusz Korczak) – or rather, creative laboratory of harmonious, spiritual and social development of student's personality.

Vasyl Sukhomlynsky focus his interests on student's personality and their psychological and educational characteristics since he became a principal of the Pavlysh school. The resolution of the pedagogical council of 22 April, 1952 states: „Having listened to Vasyl Sukhomlynsky's speech on student's educational characteristics, the pedagogical council decides to oblige all class teachers by the end of the school year to sum up students' educational characteristics of their grades, with respect to: state of health, home conditions, manner of preparing homework, memory capacity, behavior habits, skills and abilities and outline specific ways to increase student's performance at school" [*Книга протоколів…*, ППММС 13000, арк. 31].

We can't but mention that Vasyl Sukhomlynsky to mid 1950's was an ardent supporter of „school of thought" [Сухомлинська 2012: 17], with its focus on solid base of knowledge and skills and mental work of students. This was reflected in educator's views on pedagogical content: proposed scheme considers a student as a subject of learning activities, in other words, covers primarily student's intellectual and volitional traits (skills, abilities and endowments), per-

ceiving the student as an individual. Status, values, motives and, finally, student's character are evaluated in relation to how they study.

In 1953 Vasyl Sukhomlynsky published the article entitled „Student's Educational Characteristics" where he explained his views on meaning and purpose of characteristics. „Individual feautures depend primarily on the way a student understands and perceives learning material. At each stage of learning process a teacher should realize how a student performs, how he remembers and learns rules. This student's characteristic of absorption learning material and acquisition of practical skills, we believe, ought to constitute the content of educational characteristic. In our opinion, the latter should also include student's memory capacity, their work in the classroom and at home" [Сухомлинский 1953: 48]. However, Sukhomlynsky warns against categorical conclusions, stressing that student's individual characteristics are not something constant and invariable. If they change, and, therefore, student's educational characteristics change as well: „It must outline student's future prospects of development. Taking in account student's educational characteristics a teacher, first of all, should be guided by the fact how a pupil develops his talents and what else a pedagogue should do to enhance student's understanding of the lesson" [ibid].

Vasyl Sukhomlynsky notes while most teachers prepare a lesson, they take into account following student's educational characteristic: every student can perform well if the teacher correctly identify their skills and develop positive qualities whereas negative ones eliminate. The teacher notes down into student's dairy „daily observations of how student prepares for lessons, works in the classroom and memorizes learning material" [ibid]. Pavlysh school staff under the direction of Vasyl Sukhomlynsky begins to discuss students' educational characteristics at meetings of teachers who teach in the class, and some characteristics are talked over at pedagogical council meetings. This staff brainstorming, according to Vasyl Sukhomlynsky, prompted teachers to examine students deeper and more comprehensively and helped to reach a consensus about what should be studied in students' individual characteristics.

In Pavlysh school in the early 1950s was developed a comprehensive methodology for compiling educational characteristics. Data for it was collected from school daily life: how a student learnt program material in the classroom, how their practical skills and world view were formed. Teachers studied not only students' responses but also their questions, which they asked during lessons. The results of these observations were recorded in teacher's diary and at the end of the school year were analyzed by comparing what was typical for a student at the beginning and middle of the school year to that was recorded last days of the academic year. Student's work at home was also taken into account. After discussion on characteristics of certain class, teacher finally edited its list, and some of them were analyzed at the meetings of pedagogical council [Сухомлинский 1953: 49].

According to Vasyl Sukhomlynsky, the main task of a characteristic is to „be a tool for increasing further student's performance at school" [ibid]. So naturally,

educational characteristics drawn by Pavlysh school teachers in the first half of the 1950s include certain rationalism, which reveals how teachers strove to increase pupils' cognitive development. The analysis of 50 educational characteristics of graduates in 1954 led us to following conclusions. Coincidence of the same characteristics among different students is very high: from 50 characteristics the quality „attentive" was mentioned 28 times; „persistent in overcoming learning difficulties" and „diligent in doing homework" – 25. Language skills were mentioned 43 times; good memory capacity – 37, active participation – 23, studiousness – 27 etc. Teachers usually name only student's positive qualities („he likes physical work", „she is fond of needlework", „he is interested in radio engineering"). Qualitative features of the ability and degree of its manifestation are usually not specified. In addition, such evaluations are very short (maximum it is half page of handwriting) [*Книга протоколів…*, ЛВ 13004, арк. 83, зв. арк. 92, зв.].

As can be seen, among students' characteristics given by teachers central position occupy such ones as cognitive processes, attitudes to learning, evaluation of learning activities, child's willpower. This fact confirms our conclusion that teachers primarily perceive a student as a study subject, not as an individual.

Vasyl Sukhomlynsky admitted by himself that „at the beginning it was very difficult to prepare child's educational characteristics" [Сухомлинський 1977: 447], but he was firmly convinced, saying that: „The work of every teacher, director, and head teacher on educational characteristics of a child forms fundamental principles of teaching culture. When we know little about a child, there is no school, no education, no real teacher and teaching staff" [Сухомлинський 1977: 449]. Over time Vasyl Sukhomlinsky started to study scientifically a student and their educational characteristics. It was „constant, thoughtful work of each teacher on child's educational characteristics with their complex spiritual world, joys and sorrows. Thus, student's educational characteristics are based on psychological analysis, observation and learning" [Сухомлинський 1977: 455].

In 1965 for the first time ever in Ukrainian secondary school on the initiative of Vasyl Sukhomlynsky the first psychological seminar was organized for teachers of Pavlysh school. Its purpose was, by Vasyl Olexandrovych's definition, „to study a man" [Сухомлинський, *Етика відносин…*].

The effectiveness of a psychological seminar as a form of learning student's personality was impressive: enhanced psychological knowledge of teachers not only contributed to deeper understanding of their students, but also led to a drastic renewal of student's characteristics. And it was seen not only formally – in changing characteristics name from „educational" to „psychological and educational", but above all, the content of the word „characteristic" was changed as well. Thus, among students' characteristics made by teachers of Pavlysh school in the second half of 60s, „the first place was given to health, child's physical development, their overall development, individual cognitive development: how a child perceives objects and physical facts, how they form concepts, what language they use, how children memorize things, which thinking, figurative or

abstract, is more developed, what emotional coloring have their speech, what is students' level of emotional culture" [Сухомлинський 1977: 447]. A teacher, describing student's environment and conditions in which their intelligence is formed, stops on positive and negative aspects that affect child's perception, ideas, language and outlook. The huge attention of teachers is paid to intellectual life of the family.

Vasyl Sukhomlynsky focuses on an extremely important aspect of educational characteristics – its prospectivity. „We want to analyze not only what we see, but also express our thoughts, intentions, plans of an active educational impact on student's personality, tell about how this impact is made now and what difficulties we encounter in such educational work. We not only see a human as it is, but also design development of their intelligence, morality, aesthetic and emotional culture" [Сухомлинський 1977: 449].

Students' characteristics were based on principal's reports and discussed during psychological seminars. We analyzed 47 reports of psychological seminars, which are kept in the Pedagogical museum of Vasyl Sukhomlynsky [*Книга протоколів…*, ЛВ 1655, 40 арк.; *Книга протоколів…*, ЛВ 1656, 54 арк.; *Книга протоколів…*, ППММС 1657, 95 арк.; Сухомлинська 2012]. Vasyl Sukhomlynsky conducted 40 workshops, where he read 31 reports by himself. They all relate to child's mental development and aim at improving educational work: „Psychological Culture at the Lesson", „Mental Characteristics of Adolescents", „How to Teach Students to Manage Their Desires", „Discipline and Sense of Duty", „Relationship between a Teacher and Learners" and others. Knowledge gained by teachers during these workshops were practically used during studies and, consequently, helped to enhance students' characteristics.

To sum up, analyzed characteristics in the first half of 50s and late 60s, led us to conclusion that Vasyl Sukhomlynsky's views on psychological and educational characteristics evolved in parallel to development of scholar's teaching philosophy. It shows how characteristics drawn by teachers from Pavlysh school have changed during this period: at the beginning the teachers emphasized on importance of student's positive school performance and related intellectual qualities, but then they started to penetrate into the essence of students' mental processes, analyzed thoughtfully and determined causes of complex and sometimes contradictory manifestations of student's personality.

Literature

Книга протоколів засідань педагогічної ради Павлиської СШ, 24.08.51–23.08.52, Павлиський державний педагогічно-меморіальний музей В.О. Сухомлинського, ППММС 13000, 59 арк.

Книга протоколів засідань педагогічної ради Павлиської СШ на 1953–54 н.р., там само, ЛВ 13004, 97 арк.

Книга протоколів засідань психологічного семінару Павлиської СШ, там само, ЛВ 12994, 49 арк.

Книга протоколів засідань психологічного семінару Павлиської СШ, там само, ЛВ 1655, 40 арк.
Книга протоколів засідань психологічного семінару Павлиської СШ, 09.10.1968–16.04.1969/ там само, ЛВ 1656, 54 арк.
Книга протоколів засідань психологічного семінару Павлиської СШ, 8.09.1969–22.09.1971/ там само, ППММС 1657, 95 арк.
Сухомлинська В.О. (2012), *Василь Олександрович Сухомлинський – наукова біографія*, О.В. Сухомлинська, *В.О. Сухомлинський у роздумах сучасних українських педагогів*, монографія/упоряд., О.В. Сухомлинська, О.Я. Савченко, Луганськ, Вид-во ДЗ „ЛНУ імені Тараса Шевченка", с. 14–24.
Сухомлинский В.А. (1953), *Педагогическая характеристика ученика*, В.А. Сухомлинский, *Народное образование*, № 4, с. 46–49.
Сухомлинський В.О. (1977), *Розмова з молодими директором школи*, В.О. Сухомлинський, Вибрані твори, в 5 т./редкол., О.Г. Дзеверін (голова) та ін., К., Рад. шк., т. 4, К., Рад. школа, с. 391–626.
Сухомлинський В.О. (1977), *На нашій совісті – людина*, В.О. Сухомлинський, Вибрані твори, в 5 т./редкол., О.Г. Дзеверін (голова) та ін., К., Рад. шк., т. 5. с. 203–217.
Сухомлинський В.О., *Етика відносин у педагогічному колективі школи*, В.О. Сухомлинський [Електронний ресурс], Режим доступу, http://www.dnpb.gov.ua/id/482/?PHPSESSID=bc188b7934fecf891607fb102bfaf3a1

Abstract

The article highlights the evolution of Vasyl Sukhomlynsky's views on the research of student's personality; in the article principal student's psychological and educational characteristics have been described.

Keys words: Vasyl Sukhomlynsky, student's personality, psychological and educational characteristics, psychological seminar.