

## CULTIVATING THE “RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD VALUE”: EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF PRESCHOOL INSTITUTIONS’ WORK IN NIZHNY NOVGOROD

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**Abstract:** The paper analyzes the problems of cultivating the responsible parenthood value and highlights the problems of today's society associated with the level of responsible parenthood cultivation in the current generation. Among the tasks of "The strategy of development of upbringing in the Russian Federation for the time period of up to the year 2025", it is noted that the paramount condition is to render the necessary support for family upbringing based on promoting the parents' responsible attitude to raising the children and on improving their social, communicative and pedagogical competence. The ways and mechanisms are suggested for making use of various information resources in preschool educational organizations, including the efficient information tools to which the authors refer cloud computing.

**Keywords:** responsible parenthood, social project, upbringing, youth, cloud technologies, interacting.

### 1 Introduction

"The strategy of development of upbringing in the Russian Federation for the time period of up to the year 2025" (hereinafter the Strategy) (2015) gives the priority right to bring up the rising generations to parents and the family. In its turn, the state undertakes to pursue the policy of consolidating the family, creating favorable conditions for joining the efforts of the institutions of both the Russian society and the state for upbringing the rising generation on the basis of recognizing the determining role of the family. Among the tasks of the Strategy, it is also noted that the paramount condition is to render the necessary support for family upbringing based on promoting the parents' responsible attitude to raising the children and on improving their social, communicative and pedagogical competence.

However, a reasonable question arises: what state or social institution teaches responsible parenthood to the present-day parents? The study course "Ethics and psychology of family life" is known to have been excluded from the school curricula in the 1990s due to its being useless or a lack of foresight. Within the system of higher education, the subjects "Sociology of family", "Family studies", "Familiistics", "Fundamentals of the psychology of family and family counseling", "Organization of working with families having got into a difficult life situation", "Family conflict management" were as a rule elective courses and were not included into the basic component. Thus, the vital and pivot problem – creating a strong healthy family – was in fact left unattended, left to chance. As a result, for over a quarter of the century, Russia has had no focused training of parents-to-be for family life.

The relevance of the research is associated with the fact that the family and marriage statistics data for the latest quarter of the century give more than ample evidence about the onset of a deepest crisis in this sphere. Reduced birth rate and marriage rate, growth of alternative marriage forms and social orphanhood

are just few but quite telling for themselves indicators of the family as a social institution being in a deepest crisis.

### 2 Theoretical and Methodological Framework of the Research

With its relevance, the problem of responsible parenthood is studied by specialists of various domains of the scientific knowledge.

A significant contribution to the study of this range of problems was made by sociologists (Antonov, 1980; Borisov, 1976; Kon, 1999; Svadbina, 2000; et al.).

The problem of child-parent relations is the cornerstone one for psychologists and pedagogues. There is good reason behind the saying "we all come from childhood". The level of parental competence was studied and analyzed by the following researchers: S. Yu. Meshcheryakova (2000), Yu. V. Baskina (1992), G. Navaytis (1999), E. G. Eidemiller (Eidemiller et al., 2003), S. V. Chirkova (2008).

As the methodological basis of the empirical research, the methods of interview and questionnaire survey, observation and the secondary analysis of data were used.

The objective of the research is to analyze the results of two city festivals for reviewing the progress of working with families at preschool institutions of Nizhny Novgorod "In dialogue with family". Special attention will be paid to the way preschool institutions organize working with parents in order to cultivate the value of responsible parenthood in them.

Tasks of the research:

- analyzing the contemporary progress of the activity of preschool educational institutions of Nizhny Novgorod against the background of the information and communications constituent;
- identifying the factors having affected the development of the family and marriage institution adversely;
- outlining the key focus areas for the use of information and communications technology tools in organization of working with legal representatives of the learners.

### 3 Results and Discussion

For a long time, family has stayed "on the outskirts" of the state social and economic policy. It was only so-called socially unprotected families (ones having disabled children or parents, single mothers etc.) that received quite a small support while most families have remained out of sight of the state.

Each new generation was brought up in line with the "do as I do" principle. What the society has got as a result is the generations of families conveying defective models of family- and marriage-related behavior. And it is pseudoscientific surrogate in the form of various talk shows ("Let's get married", "House-2", "The blind one" etc.), astrological and Vedic schools that was quick to fill the information void having formed in questions of upbringing and starting a family.

In order to improve parental culture and consolidate the efforts of everyone associated with upbringing and teaching children in Nizhny Novgorod one way or another, in 2000, the City scientific and practical laboratory for problems of upbringing and family (hereinafter the Laboratory) was founded based on V. P. Chkalov Children's Creative Activity Center. Up to the present day, its permanent leader is N. N. Belik, a Honored citizen of Nizhny Novgorod region and a Honored worker of culture. It was the Department of education of Nizhny Novgorod city that acted as the founder of the Laboratory, which has both

raised the very status of the Laboratory considerably and allowed accessing directly the municipal educational institutions of Nizhny Novgorod.

One of the major tasks of the Laboratory was to create the united educational space in Nizhny Novgorod. In order to complete this task, the long-term Program of family upbringing "In favor of family and children" (hereinafter the Program) was developed. The main vehicles for bringing the Program into life were the city's municipal secondary general educational institutions. The choice was not random, as it is in schools that three or four generations of parents and children eventually interact. Since 2017, the scope of influence of the Laboratory has covered the city's municipal preschool institutions too, i.e. kindergartens of Nizhny Novgorod. The decision was dictated by realia of the time. The main peak of marital breakdowns falls for the first three years of life of the young family. The very birth of a child marks the start of the family being "challenged" with those natural difficulties that arise due to this event. It is in this time that is essential to support the family and help it cope with any natural difficulties arising in the process of bringing up children.

Creation of the united educational space implies building partnership relations between all actors of the pedagogical process: families, preschool educational institutions for children, as well as institutions of culture, the system of additional education, and public non-profit organizations. In this case, the family is viewed not as a "supplier of initial material", i.e. a child as an object for upbringing, and not as a source of obtaining further material benefits, but it is viewed as an equal partner in the process of upbringing. Thus, the relations are organized proceeding from the principles of cooperation, co-creativity and mutual understanding. Attaching a high status to family, motherhood, fatherhood is the crucial condition in building an equal dialogue between all actors of the pedagogical process.

**Here are the main focus areas of organizing the work with parents at MBPEI.**

### **1. Bridging the generation gaps as the basis for mutual understanding**

The pedagogical process is known to be a mutually conditioned one. With the example of participants of the festival, it is quite clearly seen that while teaching the parents, the pedagogical collective themselves learn a lot, too. Alongside with running compulsory pedagogy training for all young teachers in order to pass on the experience accumulated and pedagogical excellence, they organize seminars, workshops, and business games at children's preschool institutions where teachers get the opportunity to discuss complicated pedagogical situations on an equal footing. With regard to this, such events help representatives of different generations of the teaching staff learn to understand each other. When mentored by the experienced ones, the young teachers adapt to conditions of working at MBPEI more easily. As for the generation of teachers at the retirement and pre-retirement age, this is an opportunity to communicate with the youth in order to understand them better.

The point is that currently, preschool teachers mainly have to deal with parents of the late 1990s – early 2000s generation. These are the parents who participated neither in Little Octobrist, nor Pioneer, nor Young Communist League movements, i.e. they have poorly developed community and humanist values.

Digitization of consciousness is a sort of symbol of the era as well. Owing to the easily accessible information from the worldwide Web, the young parents deem themselves to be well-read and educated people who know everything. With regard to this, due to their "being online" for the greater part of their free time, they already have no time left for communicating with their own child. This is the reason why so many as up to 90% of the present-day children of preschool age have certain problems with speech and need aid of a speech therapist or a special-needs expert.

Meanwhile, no cinema or TV program, computer game or cartoon, however top-rate they may be, can replace living human communication. It is communication via joint activity, creativity, games that creates the shared language of mutual understanding, the language of verbal and non-verbal communications. An interesting observation was contributed by one of the chairmen of the parents' collective. The question "Do you feel the difference between your sons of different ages (the elder one is twenty, and the youngest one is only four)?" was answered by him to the effect that having to spend much time with the children in person, he felt no intergenerational difference at all. This is quite an illustrative phenomenon. In those families who have living human communication, joint activity and co-creativity, there is also mutual understanding.

### **2. United communication space as the major condition for efficient interaction between the parents, the MBPEI, institutions of additional education, state structures and non-profit organizations**

As organizing the high-quality and efficient communication exchange between parents, teachers and psychologists, preschool institutions for children use interactive communication forms both via websites of the municipal budget-funded preschool educational institutions (MBPEI) and by means of mailboxes installed in the group rooms specially for parents. The parents' questions are subdivided according to topics and then brought up for discussion at the parents' and pedagogical meetings or become a matter for individual advice.

Each of MBPEI participating in the festival has a parents' association, with some of them even having Councils of fathers. The parents not only assess the quality of food for children, as is conventionally the case, but they get engaged into the public life of the children's preschool educational institutions, too; they are at the forefront of organizing workshops in line with their interests. Communication between parents, their being not indifferent to upbringing of their children enables the parents to activate their creative potential, to fulfill themselves both in creativity and in public life organization.

According to the fair comment of N. N. Belik, alongside with all their functions, festivals of this kind are a personnel-focused event, too. The most capable, resourceful parents and teachers having managerial abilities, knowledge and opportunities for organizing pedagogical, educational and cultural life in the city are selected at the festivals. For instance, it is during such festivals that the leaders of the "Council of fathers", Nizhny Novgorod public movement, were chosen (A. A. Zarembo, A. N. Nikiforov, V. A. Ivanov, P. A. Razzhiving et al.) (Fathers of Nizhny Novgorod: a Glance into the Future, 2017).

As of today, the movement of fathers of Nizhny Novgorod is the flagship of All-Russian movement of fathers. A. A. Zarembo – leader of the fathers' movement – became a media figure easily recognizable in the community of Nizhny Novgorod. Meanwhile, at the beginning of all that there was quite a usual ordinary school that was looking for a family capable to take part in the "Family of the year" contest, and A. A. Zarembo, a retired military man and a father of three (two own sons and an adopted daughter), heeded this initiative. Participation in the contest, acquaintance and further communication with N. N. Belik swept the man into the whirlpool of pedagogical work – first at the city level, and at the country-wide one by now. This fact confirms the "openness" of the process, too, i.e. everyone willing can join the movement, find their niche and be useful for the society. All people are either someone's children or someone else's parents, which means, they have the right to join in the shared process of creating the united educational environment that allows developing the future generations of Russian in a harmonious way.

### **3. Information and outreach activity of MBPEI**

Regrettably, the sad fact should be recognized that from the most reading nation the Russians have degraded and transformed into

one of the most ignorant nations within less than thirty years. The generations of the young parents have almost stopped reading books and, as a consequence, going to libraries. And it is the information from pseudo-, quasi- and mock-scientific sources that was quick to fill the information void on how to raise children these days.

According to the well-known Arabic saying, if the mountain won't come to Mohammed, then Mohammad must go to the mountain. It is this idea that became the foundation for attracting the parents' attention to the professional scientific and methodological literature on upbringing and family problems. At MBPEI, thematic exhibitions of training and methodological books and issues are created for parents with the aim to raise the parental culture level. For this, libraries are engaged whose activity covers this micro-section. Thus, parents get the opportunity of access to books without having to visit the library. Given their being busy at work and with household chores, the MBPEI in their partnership with libraries enable the parents to get acquainted with the world psychology and pedagogy thought bank and to remain updated on the new trends of the psychological and pedagogical process. In these mobile bookshelves, there are also works by scientists of the Laboratory (a doctor of philosophical sciences, familist T. V. Svadbina, doctors of pedagogical sciences V. V. Nikolina and F. V. Povshednaya, a candidate of medical sciences, gynecologist O. M. Stelnikova, a candidate of historical sciences A. F. Tatarchenko et al.).

At MPEI, special booklets and memos for parents are created that contain information relevant for the age of their children. The printed media are placed in the open access both in the group room and in specially designed for this thematic corners. The parents are also provided with the relevant information on where and how one can organize weekend family leisure.

With the present-day improvement of computer technologies, as everyone has a technical device and can find any information, teachers get the opportunity of a broader coverage of the parent audience. The popular cloud technologies can become a tool for organizing the work with parents. Cloud computing involves digital data storage in the Internet which allows storing, editing and sharing the interesting files and documents with one's friends, parents and colleagues. They support communicating via laptops, PCs, smartphones, cellphones and other devices.

Cloud technologies have their own advantages, too, just like any technology. The main of them is accessibility – "clouds" are accessible to everyone and in every place where the Internet connection is available and from any device that has a browser (Shirokova 2011). There are currently numerous cloud services that can be applied in the educational process, in particular, for informing, interacting as well as raising the parents' pedagogical awareness. Alongside with that, the opportunities of cloud technologies are aimed at time optimization.

The tools offered by these technologies help teachers to vary and increase the efficiency of the forms of educational process support, as well as enhance the quality of working with the children's families.

The advantages of using the cloud technologies for interacting with the preschoolers' families consist in the following:

1. Enabling the parents to access the information at the optimum time;
2. Receiving the information promptly;
3. Enabling the teachers to demonstrate any documents, pictures, video and audio materials;
4. Providing the dialogue between specialists and parents as well as individual and group approach in working with families.

At present, cloud computing is no longer an innovation known to a relatively narrow circle of professionals – which it used to be until quite recently. These technologies are currently accessible

in one form or another to any user of the Internet, and they are becoming increasingly popular.

#### 4 Conclusion

Proceeding from the above, let it be stated that studying the problem of cultivating the responsible parenthood value with the use of the opportunities the preschool institutions system as well as the IT means offer is quite a new and relevant problem that demands further investigation by the scientific community in various domains. Using cloud technologies in conditions of working with children's parents helps boost the adults' participation in upbringing, create the atmosphere of shared interests, emotional support and mutual understanding, enhance the satisfaction from work and the efficiency of activity in child-rearing. The authors believe that positive dynamics will result from that in the process of cultivating the responsible parenthood value. Lest the mass media, like the Pied Piper, should lure children away from their parents' protection and custody, they have to show more living human care about the life of their closest and dearest ones, in order to understand them better and to keep spiritual kinship with them.

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