

This volume collects chapters on the history of educational and child-care services in various European countries since the period following World War II, with the aim of shedding light on legislative reforms and the change in educational methods that affect children up to three years of age. From a comparative point of view, the different chapters – written by fifteen authors (Catherine Bouve, Janet De Vigne, Diana Franke-Meyer, Noémi Janek, Eleni Kainourgiou, Tora Korsvold, Claudine Marissal, Eleni Mousena, Aggné Veronika Pirka, Tiziana Pironi, David Salomoni, Carmen Sanchidrián Blanco, Simona Salustri, and Johannes Westberg) – describe the history of the day nurseries in France and Belgium, Sweden and Norway, Germany and Scotland, Spain and Portugal, Italy, Greece, Hungary, and the Soviet Union, paying particular attention to the important process of transformation from welfare institutions to educational services for children from birth to three years of age. In the context of the European policy field of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), which deals with children from birth to compulsory school age, such institutions are undergoing a further evolution towards a European model of preschool education. This volume aims to deepen a story that is still little known and investigated. It is aimed at students and educators in educational science courses, because knowledge of the past can be the basis for better analysis and development of the reforms in progress. The recent development of the “integrated 0–6 system” (of nurseries and kindergarten), a well-known and integrated education and training system from birth up to six years underway in Italy, is part of these recent changes.

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€ 27,50



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History of Early Education Institutions in Europe From WWII until the Recent Reforms Dorena Caroli

History of Early Education Institutions in Europe

From WWII until the Recent Reforms

edited by **Dorena Caroli**



Transnational History of Education and Civilizations

directed by Dorena Caroli

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This series of volumes aims to publish monographs or collective volumes, both in Italian and other languages, concerning the history of pedagogy as widely understood within the Italian university field M-Ped/02. The studies will address issues that include the history of pedagogical ideas, education and educational institutions in general, and, in particular, preschool institutions and children's literature. Particular attention will be devoted to transnational and comparative dimensions of the educational problems and to pedagogical transfers of the past, which allows us to grasp the circulation of educational models and reciprocal influences at an institutional and cultural level. The multiple approaches of cultural history will also be adopted for the interpretation of the educational reforms and institutions of the different historical periods.

The volumes are subjected to double-blind review.

Responsible for the review process is the publisher's redaction.

History of Early Education Institutions in Europe from WWII until the Recent Reforms

edited by
Dorena Caroli



Questo volume è stato finanziato con il contributo del Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Educazione "Giovanni Maria Bertin" dell'Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna / This volume was financed by the contribution of the Department of Education Studies "Giovanni Maria Bertin", Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna.

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ISBN 978-88-491-5741-3

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Introduction

Dorena Caroli

Over the past thirty years, the history of early childhood educational institutions, now known at the European level as early childhood education and care (ECEC) institutions, has been the subject of numerous studies that have given rise to new historiographical trends. Some are interested in European education policies and social changes that have affected Europe at the beginning of the new millennium, others in the function that these institutions have in the welfare and education systems of different countries or in the role that these institutions have played in family policies.

The birth and development of this historiography seem to have been marked by some important legislative acts, such as the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959). Thanks to the work of Philippe Ariès¹, which reflected on the evolution of the idea of childhood as a cultural construct in relation to the structure of the family and social classes, new studies have investigated unknown aspects and chapters of the history of childhood, its culture and educational institutions. Among the first published studies after the Convention on the Rights on the Child (1989), which was an important impetus for the development of this field of research², are those by Catherine Rollet, Edward C. Melhuish and Peter Moss that highlighted the international perspectives of a research that was taking its first steps in the early nineties³.

At the European level, other important and innovative studies have also followed, such as that by Hugh Cunningham, who offered a very signifi-

¹ P. Ariès, *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime*, Paris, Plon, 1960; Seuil, 1963 [English trans. R. Baldick, *Centuries of childhood. A Social History of Family life*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1962].

² Z. Moody, *Transnational Treaties on Children's Rights: Norm Building and Circulation in the Twentieth Century*, in «Paedagogica Historica», 50/1-2 (2014), pp. 151-164.

³ C. Rollet, *La politique à l'égard de la petite enfance sous la III^e République. Annexes : bibliographie, index*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1990; E.C. Melhuish, P. Moss (eds.), *Day Care for Young Children. International Perspectives*, London and New York, Tavistock/Routledge, 1991.

cant comparative framework for capturing some important aspects of childhood history such as the fight against infant mortality⁴. The history of child abandonment is neglected by the present volume, but is no less important. Among the most interesting studies on the concept of childhood culture is the large collection edited by Egle Becchi and Dominique Julia, which presents new chapters on the history of childhood, educational institutions for early childhood and theories about early childhood⁵.

Step by step, many unpublished aspects of the history of educational institutions aimed at preschool education have been addressed with very different perspectives and methodologies. Among the first to study preschool institutions in depth was Jean-Noël Luc⁶, who studied birth and development in France, a country that has been an important European model in child protection.

The field of research into preschool institutions has since been extended up to more recent times, with considerable insights into the various national contexts since the beginning of the new millennium⁷. These insights were in relation to the development of national school systems on the one hand, and family politics on the other⁸. Some studies, including a recent one edited by Karen Hagemann, Konrad H. Jarausch and Cristina Allemann-Ghionda⁹, compare the history of policies concerning childcare and educational institutions with those on the family, with a wide choice of national cases highlighted. Progressively, the focus has extended to other nations and internationally has included the United States, Africa, Japan and other countries thanks to the monumental work of V. Celia Lascarides and Blythe Farb

⁴ H. Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500*, Harlow, England, London, New York, Pearson Longman, 1995 (2005, 2nd ed.).

⁵ E. Becchi, D. Julia (eds.), *Histoire de l'enfance. Tome I: De l'Antiquité au XVIII^e siècle. Tome II: Du XVIII^e siècle à nos jours*, Paris, Seuil, 1998.

⁶ See for example J.-N. Luc, *L'invention du jeune enfant au XIX^e siècle. De la salle d'asile à l'école maternelle*, Paris, Berlin, 1997, pp. 392-398.

⁷ E. Melhuish, K. Petrogiannis, *Early Childhood Care and Education: International Perspectives*, London, Routledge, 2006; T. Bertram, C. Pascal, *Early Childhood Policies and Systems In Eight Countries*, Cham, Switzerland, Springer International, 2016.

⁸ See K. Scheiwe, H. Willekens (eds.), *Child Care and Preschool Development in Europe. Institutional Perspectives*, Houndsmills, Basingstoke Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009; H. Willekens, K. Scheiwe, K. Nawrotzki (eds.), *The Development of Early Childhood Education in Europe and North America. Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

⁹ K. Hagemann, K.H. Jarausch, C. Allemann-Ghionda (eds.), *Children, Families, and States. Time Policies of Childcare, Preschool, and Primary Education in Europe*, New York, Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2011.

Hinitz¹⁰, who focused on the circulation of Froebel's, Montessori's and other educational methods at the international level within these institutions.

The chapters collected in this volume present the reconstruction of the history of services for children, and in particular of infant-toddler centres from the second postwar period to recent decades (in some cases until 2000–2010), with a focus on the transformations mainly in services and educational theories aimed at the 0–3 years age range. In fact, despite the trend at the European level of education systems for 0–6-year-olds converging towards preschool education, in the past, a great variety of institutions for younger children were present in different national contexts. In the past, there was a real division of early childhood services, which were either caring or educational services for preschool-aged children. As Diana Sousa and Peter Moss argue:

From the start, therefore, the early childhood sector was split, between 'child-care' services and school or kindergarten services, usually overseen by different branches of government, and differing in terms of regulation, funding, type of provision, workforce and primary purpose. Today a handful of countries have moved beyond this initial split and created a completely integrated early childhood service¹¹.

Although numerous studies are available on institutions for groups of children aged 3–6 in various countries, intended as preschool institutions (from *salle d'asiles*, *écoles maternelles*, kindergarten, nursery schools, *detskie sady*), these chapters try to deepen the history of the institutions meant for to the 0–3 age group in order to complete the study of cases absent in other published volumes and offer a picture of the complexity of the current situation. The aim is to illustrate the changes that have taken place in various countries in the context of post-World War II welfare reforms, although some have more detail and depth than others.

These institutions for early childhood, which arose in most European countries on the basis of Firmin Marbeau's French model, played a fundamental role in countering the consequences of the war, facilitating the return

¹⁰ V. Celia Lascarides, B.F. Hinitz (eds.), *History of Early Childhood Education*, New York and London, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2000; B. Farb Hinitz (ed.), *The Hidden History of Early Education*, New York and London, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013.

¹¹ P. Moss, D. Sousa, *Introducing the special issue on 'Comparative studies in early childhood education: past, present and future'*, in «Comparative education», 58/3 (2022), p. 288.

of women to the workforce, and contributing to a more inclusive policy towards children from more disadvantaged social backgrounds¹².

At different times, a slow transformation of these institutions in an educational sense took place in the postwar period. The desire to elaborate and adopt new educational strategies, thanks to the studies of child developmental psychology that resumed after World War II, has made it possible to significantly renew the educational methods adopted in these institutions, also contributing to an improvement in staff training and a greater engagement of parents in services that have also become increasingly important for the development of the concept of parenthood. The changes that have taken place have contributed to emancipating these institutions from being mere providers of assistance to education, bringing them closer and closer to real preschool institutions. In some cases, it was also possible to observe the international circulation of educational methods, as well as reciprocal pedagogical influences in different European countries¹³.

Unlike the research that has produced some social history and/or sociology studies, the present chapters try to offer some historical-educational insights into the different phases of the reforms and the legislative acts that mark the changes. The different authors describe the characteristics of different national contexts in a macro-historical perspective, with a periodization that sometimes approaches the current reforms, in other cases the reconstruction concerns the characteristics of two decades or the study of a particular case. The attention to the historiographical production that accompanies the studies in this collection also has the purpose of relating the results of the studies collected here with the research done so far in order to offer teaching and research tool for students and doctoral students, in a field that deserves considerable further investigations.

This collection is made up of thirteen chapters (written by 15 authors) divided into six parts. The first part contains chapters on France and Belgium. *Catherine Bouve* reconstructs the history of nurseries in France from 1945 to 1995 with attention to the main reforms, particularly the renewal of educational methods and the protagonists of these concepts. It is a context that is particularly sensitive to the reception and debate of pedagogical concepts that stimulate the growth of the child. In fact, crèches originated in France, becoming an international model. *Claudine Marissal* describes both the development of the nursery network and the role of feminist or-

¹² D. Caroli, *Day nurseries and childcare in Europe, 1800–1939*, London, Palgrave, 2017, pp. 3–59.

¹³ S. Rayna, F. Laevers, *Understanding Children from 0 to 3 Years of Age and Its Implications for Education. What's New on the Babies's Side? Origins and Evolutions*, in «European Early Childhood Education Research Journal», 19/2 (2011), pp. 161–172.

ganizations in the vindication of these institutions in Belgium, with a focus on postwar debates on the effects of childcare, with an important shift in perspective leading to a significant increase from the 1970s onwards¹⁴.

The second part presents chapters on Sweden and Norway. *Johannes Westberg* reconstructs the history of childcare services in Sweden, examining the process that led to the birth of a unitary preschool service, which welcomes children between the ages of 1 and 5 years. *Tora Korsvold* discusses the history of laws relating to early childhood services in Norway from the postwar period to the beginning of 2000, showing how this service, which has become a right since 2006, has developed since the 1960s. Research shows that Norwegian crèches have also become institutions based on educational and playful activities.

The third part concerns Germany and Scotland. *Diana Franke Meyer* recounts the reforms in the two divided Germanies, which were distinguished by tradition, institutional competence and educational methods. While in the Federal Republic there was no developed system to handle children under 3 years of age, in the German Democratic Republic there was a mass expansion, accompanied by the introduction of pedagogical methods of Soviet origin. *Janet de Vigne* discusses the perception of educator work and the changes introduced in Scotland through major reforms based on a rich choice of government reports that, until recently, resolved the dichotomy between education and care on the one hand and low staff wages on the other.

The fifth part contains chapters on Italy and Greece. *Tiziana Pironi* describes experiences in Italy that testify to the change from the management of the National Institution for the Maternity and Childhood (ONMI) to other entities: the Olivetti day nursery in Ivrea, the Montessori centre in Rome founded by Adele Costa Gnocchi, a pupil of Maria Montessori, and the nursery run by Dr Nino (Eustachio) Loperfido in the city of Bologna. As this chapter reveals, the cities of Emilia-Romagna played a pioneering role, anticipating the promulgation of the law N. 1044 ("Piano quinquennale per l'istituzione di asili-nido comunali con il concorso dello Stato"; Five-year plan for the establishment of municipal day nurseries (asili nido) with the support of the State) in 1971, thanks to Adriana Lodi, a city councillor in Bologna and a Member of Parliament. Her work on childhood issues and the reform of educational institutions gave great impetus to the birth of a new culture of the child, a subject of educational rights and not just an object of welfare care.

With respect to these changes, in Italy and particularly the Emilia-Romagna region, which is one of the most studied, the conciliatory func-

¹⁴ This part is in French, while the others are in English.

tion of the day nurseries is particularly evident with regard to agricultural workers, as shown in the chapter by *Simona Salustri*, which also recounts the political debate over the protection of female labour (in particular mondine, seasonal female workers who plant and harvest rice) and the characteristics of childcare in the countryside of Bologna. As for Greece, the chapter by *Eleni Mousena and Eleni Kainourgiou* reconstructs the history of the paradigm shift in childcare services, paying attention to the institutionalization process and the evolution of the educational model that occurred in close collaboration with research conducted in the university environment.

Finally, part six presents chapters on Hungary and the Soviet Union. In both countries, crèches were part of the vast welfare system and experienced similar problems, such as scarcity of services relative to women's needs to work while maintaining a family and the training of personnel which improved over the decades. The stages of renewal and development were different in the two socialist countries, although Soviet influence on the Hungarian early education system had already been visible since the 1950s. The chapter by *Aggné Veronika Pirka and Noémi Janek* presents the development of these institutions in Hungary, in which the paediatrician Emmi Pikler stands out. The chapter also discusses the renewal of educational methods in the more general context of the postwar welfare state reforms and the increasing role of the government in supporting families¹⁵. The chapter also pays particular attention to the crucial problem of staff training.

As for the Soviet Union, *Dorena Caroli's* final chapter studies the postwar recovery and shows a completely different reality from the images of the propaganda with regard to the well-being of women over the following two decades¹⁶. Shortage of crèches and problems related to poor staff training lead to nurseries and kindergartens joining to form preschool education institutions. Although this was a solution that made "a virtue of necessity", in reality, it led to a progressive transformation into educational institutions, characterized by interesting experiments at a pedagogical level, which often drew inspiration from the historical-cultural school.

¹⁵ D. Szikra, *Tradition Matters: Childcare, Preschool, and Primary Education in Modern Hungary*, in S. Hering (ed.), *Social Care Under Socialism (1945–1989). Ambitions, Ambiguities, and Mismanagement*, Opladen & Farmington Hills, MI, Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2009, pp. 364–384.

¹⁶ A. Rakhochkine, *Beyond Ideology: The Time Policy of Russian School Education since 1945*, in Hagemann, Jarausch, Allemann-Ghionda (eds.), *Children, Families, and States. Time Policies of Childcare, Preschool, and Primary Education in Europe*, cit., pp. 323–343.

For this volume authors from various universities and scientific backgrounds have paid greater attention to the historical evolution that occurred immediately following the Second World War. They investigated the pre-school education system, until the most recent developments¹⁷, since day nursery is an important institution that guarantees the passage of the first three years of a child's life into preschool institutions. Recent European politics has shown this trend through the development of ECEC institutions educating "children aged 0–6" or seven in some countries.

The initial idea of studying the transnational circulation and slow transformation of practices in relation to the dissemination of new pedagogical theories and ideas was confronted with the limited accessibility (during the pandemic years) of archives and libraries. In some cases, the pandemic has forced the authors to sacrifice gleanings based on primary sources. Several chapters reveal the process of transnational circulation of educational methods in the inter-war period and moments of exchange¹⁸, while in other chapters it has not been possible to demonstrate elements of phenomena of cultural and pedagogical transfer from one country to another European one, although the same work of translation of the pedagogical works has been well documented and offers examples of the borrowing of pedagogical theories about newborn children and children of 3 years and under. This stimulus to circulate and exchange methods is represented by the common tendency in institutional development, still ongoing at the European level in ECEC institutions that handle children aged 0–6.

Before concluding, we should emphasize that the Italian case seems particularly rich in experimentation after the Second World War. The general context was studied by Monica Ferrari, who highlights that the transformation of the day nursery as an educational service takes place in phases that correspond to the emanation of the regional provisions relating to the Italian national law of 1971 (N. 1044, mentioned previously). It should be added that some publications from the 1980s¹⁹, the result of confer-

¹⁷ E. Nottoli (ed.), *Lo 0-6 in Europa, un viaggio nell'infanzia*, Bergamo, Zeroisep, 2016.

¹⁸ See for example D. Caroli, *Day Nurseries in Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: The Challenge of the Transnational Approach*, in E. Roldán Vera, E. Fuchs (eds.), *The Transnational in the history of Education*, Cham, Palgrave, 2019, pp. 69-100.

¹⁹ P.O. Ghedini (ed.), *Quali prospettive per l'infanzia. Partecipazione e gestione dei servizi della trasformazione dello Stato sociale. Atti del seminario internazionale promosso dalla Regione Emilia-Romagna e dall'OCSE-CERI: Bologna 17-19 ottobre 1984*, Scandicci, La Nuova Italia, 1988.

ences that compared Italian realities with foreign ones, took stock of the transformation of the Italian day nursery from a welfare institution to an educational institution after this 1971 law, already studied with reference to the political and social dimensions²⁰. In fact, some regions intervened in this field only as late as 1973²¹. In general, today in Italy there is still a great disparity between the quantity of ECEC services in some regions of the north and in particular south, where the percentage of accessibility is still very low.

This volume does not include descriptions of other important Italian experiences that, however, are worth noting to demonstrate the fact that childcare services in Italy have been the result of political achievements and the commitment of pedagogists. Among the most important is that of Margherita Zoebeli in Rimini (Emilia Romagna). Coming from Switzerland to Rimini, almost razed to the ground, this courageous woman opened and managed the Italian-Swiss Educational Center (well known as CEIS)²², as well as a nursery school and an institution similar to an orphanage.

The pioneering experience of the 1980s in Bologna, thanks to the introduction of the Lóczy-Pikler method, developed by the paediatrician Emmi Pikler at the Lóczy orphanage in Hungary, is also very interesting. As Susanna Mantonavi states, this method was implemented thanks to the translation from French of her work (already translated into Italian for the first time in 1978) almost 7 years after law N. 1044 of 1971 on day nurseries (*nidi d'infanzia*)²³, and it is defined as «an unusual mothering» for nurseries, based on the autonomy of the child²⁴. It is certainly an example of transnational circulation in which the history of these early childhood institutions is dotted. In general, after World War II, the entire Emilia-Romagna region

²⁰ See the evolution of the institutional childcare before the 1968 reform presented by E.M. Hohnnerlein, *The Paradox of Public preschools in a Familist Welfare Regime: the Italian case*, in Scheiwe, Willekens (eds.), *Child Care and Preschool development in Europe. Institutional Perspectives*, cit., pp. 88-104.

²¹ M. Ferrari, *Asilo nido e scuole dell'infanzia nel primo trentennio della Repubblica italiana tra proposte educative e disposizioni normative*, in G. Zago (ed.), *L'educazione extrascolastica nella seconda metà del Novecento. Tra espansione e rinnovamento (1945-1975)*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2017, pp. 63-84.

²² T. Pironi, *Per una pedagogia dell'utopia concreta: la comunità educativa di Margherita Zoebeli*, in C. De Maria (ed.), *Intervento sociale e azione educativa. Margherita Zoebeli nell'Italia del secondo dopoguerra*. Atti del Convegno tenutosi al Centro educativo italo-svizzero, Rimini, 7 maggio 2011, Bologna, Clueb, 2012, pp. 59-81.

²³ M. David, G. Appell, *Una relazione educativa insolita. Lóczy*. Pres. di S. Mantovani, trad. Giuliana Santambrogio, Parma, Spaggiari, 2012.

²⁴ S. Mantovani, *Presentazione*, *ivi*, pp. 7-9.

was characterized by a political will, mostly communist-oriented, to renew services for children that would better meet local needs. Other experiences have distinguished themselves and testify to great confidence in the educational sciences and in the elaboration of a new pedagogy for educational services, such as the case of the educational services of Pistoia in Tuscany to which Egle Becchi dedicated herself for many years, and which has been also studied in the United States²⁵.

The Reggio Children Approach, founded by pedagogist Loris Malaguzzi, has been described by several scholars²⁶, and is very important, even for the international circulation of the evolution of the Italian nursery in an educational sense, although it is not dealt with in this volume. Malaguzzi's method is the basis of many innovative experiences abroad too, since Reggio Emilia has become a destination for visits by important scholars such as Howard Gardner (1943–)²⁷. The translation of Malaguzzi's writings into English accounts for intense theoretical discussions and activities in Italy, the renewal of day nurseries as services for children aged 0–6, as well as a system dealing with day care and pre-school education until school age²⁸. In 1980, Malaguzzi also initiated the national “nursery and childhood” group (Gruppo nazionale nidi e infanzia), which recently celebrated its 40th anniversary by offering reflections on the future²⁹.

The Italian education system, which is defined as integrated for children up to access to school, was the subject of legislation on 13 April 2017, with decree no. 65 that established an “integrated education and training system from birth up to six years” (Sistema integrato 0-6)³⁰. This follows the

²⁵ E. Becchi, *Incontri e alleanze*, in Ead. (ed.), *Una pedagogia del buon gusto. Esperienze e progetti dei servizi educativi per l'infanzia del Comune di Pistoia*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2010, pp. 215-231 (see pp. 227-228).

²⁶ N. Barbieri, *Historical Features of Early Childhood Education*, Maria Montessori and Loris Malaguzzi, in A.S. Canestrari, B.A. Marlowe (eds.), *The Wiley International Handbook of Educational Foundations*, Hoboken NJ, Wiley Blackwell, 2019, pp. 335-349.

²⁷ A.H. Planillo, *Loris Malaguzzi. Una biografia pedagogica. Seconda edizione*, trad. di Francesca Davoli, Bergamo, Gruppo Spaggiari Parma, 2020.

²⁸ P. Cagliari, M. Castagnetti, C. Giudici, C. Rinaldi, V. Vecchi, P. Moss (eds.), *Loris Malaguzzi and the Schools of Reggio Emilia. A Selection of His Writings and Speeches, 1945–1993*, trans. Jane McCall, London and New York, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2016.

²⁹ L. Campioni, F. Cremaschi, A. Garbarini, S. Mantovani, T. Musatti (eds.), *1980/2020. Per i prossimi 40 anni*, Bergamo, Zeroseiup, 2021.

³⁰ See A. Bobbio, *I servizi educativi per l'infanzia. La scuola materna statale nel secolo del bambino*, in M. Gecchele, S. Polenghi, P. Dal Toso (eds.), *Il Novecento: il*

indications for the curriculum (No. 254) of 2012 for kindergarten (*scuola dell'infanzia*)³¹. This means that the historical split between day nurseries and nurseries will be removed in order to guarantee better development and education of children. Furthermore, in Italy, there is still an important discrepancy in attendance, accessibility and quality between the North and the South. In a comparative work, Enea Nottoli stated that

In the EU 28.93% of children between the ages of four and the starting age for compulsory primary school attend a primary education facility. However, only 30% of children under 3 attend an ECEC facility, confirming that in this respect the gap among the various European countries continues to remain very wide³².

For this reason, the different chapters open new perspectives of research into different national contexts for the study of the process through which national policies and state reforms are intertwined with practices at the local level and theories of childhood that modify the practice of daily education. It is hoped that new research will be able to combine the macro- and micro-historical perspectives on education and that they will shed light on the changes in educational practices, in parents' perceptions of institutions and eventually, in the educational results achieved by children who attended preschool institutions. The aspect of staff training is also of great interest and will merit further investigation.

This work was the result of a continuous exchange among the authors of the chapters, carried out during the pandemic period of January 2020 to 2022, with a hope for future collaborations in the years to come.

We thank the authors for their participation in the seminars and discussions, which have always been stimulating. We are also grateful to Janet de Vigne and Alice Greaves for their support in the editorial work on different parts of this volume.

secolo del bambino?, Bergamo, Edizioni Junior/Gruppo Spaggiari, 2017, pp. 393-410.

³¹ G. Cerini, C. Mion, G. Zunino (eds.), *Scuola dell'infanzia e prospettiva "zerosei"*, Faenza, Edizioni Homeless Book, 2019.

³² E. Nottoli, *Introduzione*, in Id. (ed.), *Lo 0-6 in Europa, un viaggio nell'infanzia*, Bergamo, Zeroseiup, 2016, pp. 5-13 (p. 6).

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The Reform of Day Nurseries in the Soviet Union. Towards a Preschool Education System (1945–1970s)

Dorena Caroli

Abstract – This chapter lays out the main changes that affected the Soviet system of preschool education, in particular day nurseries for very young children, from 1945 to the end of the 1970s. This period spans the last phase of Stalinism, de-Stalinization and the so-called Khrushchev Thaw (from mid-1950s to the mid-1960s). The period can be divided into two. The first phase, which concerns the years immediately after the war, was characterized by an initial increase in the number of day nurseries, which, however, were unable to offer adequate care and assistance to children due to the lack of suitable health conditions and qualified staff. This situation, accompanied by poor implementation of the construction plan for the nursery buildings, led to a quest for solutions at the local level, in the form of the merger of the day nurseries with the kindergartens. The formation of such unified institutions increased over time, with the consequent development of continuous education for children up to seven years of age, both in urban and rural areas. The second part deals with the elaboration of different psycho-pedagogical theories that, after the repression of paedology in 1936, constituted the basis for the introduction of new educational methods in the nurseries. Two trends emerged in continuity with the past, the first linked to Pavlovian psychology and the second to the research of the “historical-cultural” school founded by the well-known psychologist Lev Vygotsky. The reality is complex and very different from the propaganda of a near-universal admission of children under the age of three to these institutions. Nonetheless, the progressive creation of a preschool system contributed to the increasing transfer of these institutions into the purview of the Ministry of Education, making them educational institutions, as was happening in other European countries.

Introduction

This chapter presents some aspects of the evolution of preschool education institutions in the Soviet Union in the thirty years from the end of the World War II to the end of the 1970s. Concerning the history of day nurseries, this period, which coincides with the last phase of Stalinism (Stalin died in 1953), de-Stalinization and also the so-called Thaw, is still little studied but is interesting due to the characteristics of the preschool institutions after the Second World War in comparison with the previous twenty years.

The history of day nurseries after World War II underwent various phases that will be described in this chapter. In order to better grasp the pre- and post-World War II developments, it must be explained that, after the October Revolution, the new government was particularly interested in infancy and the education of children to found a new communist society¹. Compared to the tsarist past, the 1920s reforms aimed at improving the living conditions of children and educating “a new child” in the light of communism. The institutions in charge of preschool education were managed by two government institutions: the People’s Commissariat for Enlightenment, which dealt with kindergartens for children aged four–seven as well as the school system², and the People’s Commissariat for Health, which dealt with day nurseries (*detskie iasli* in Russian) for children under the age of three and was in charge of health policy³.

The development of these childcare institutions, therefore, depended on the policies of the two Commissariats, bearing in mind that the education sector was held back in its reforms because it had to invest a large part of its resources to address the mass problem of abandoned children during the 1920s⁴. These children of various ages left without families were welcomed

¹ D. Caroli, *Il ‘nuovo bambino’ in Unione sovietica dalla Rivoluzione d’ottobre alla caduta del regime comunista (1917-1991)*, in M. Gecchele, S. Polenghi, P. Dal Toso (eds.), *Il Novecento: il secolo del bambino?*, Bergamo, Edizioni Junior-Spaggiari, 2017, pp. 105-123.

² L.A. Kirschenbaum, *Small Comrades. Revolutionizing Childhood in Soviet Russia, 1917–1932*, New York, Routledge Falmer, 2001, pp. 50-62; Y. Valkanova and K.J. Brehony, *The Gifts and ‘Contributions’: Friedrich Froebel and Russian Education (1850–1929)*, in «History of Education», 35/2 (2006), pp. 189-207.

³ D. Caroli, *Day Nurseries and Childcare in Europe, 1800–1939*, London, Palgrave, 2017, pp. 267-293; Kirschenbaum, *Small Comrades. Revolutionizing Childhood in Soviet Russia, 1917–1932*, cit., pp. 50-62.

⁴ D. Caroli, *Socialisme et protection sociale: une tautologie? L’enfance abandonnée en URSS (1917–1931)*, in «Annales ESC», 54/6 (1999), pp. 1291-1316.

into orphanages and working communities⁵. Instead, the infant-toddler centres entered the network of services in favour of the mother and the child separately, as in Italy during the fascist period, and while expressing a pro-natalist demographic policy in Italy, they had a health vocation, aimed at preventing disease and infant mortality. In any case, both institutions had to contribute to improving the conditions not only of childhood but also of women, who were forced to emancipate themselves from the traditional role of mother to become workers.

For this reason, the network of services for children experienced an important development following the post-revolutionary years both in urban and rural areas, although after WWII there was a reversal of trends compared to the past. While before the Revolution there was a greater diffusion of day nurseries in rural areas, in conjunction with the first five-year plan (1928–1932), its presence was recorded above all in the city, with particular intensity in the industrial areas that employed female labourers. The wellbeing and health of children were fundamental for the new regime, and avant-garde architects also committed themselves to the construction of buildings. An interesting building model, with the constructivist style, was designed in 1932 by famous architect Nikolaj A. Miliutin (1889–1942), who specialized in the construction of the socialist city. The building, featuring geometric structures with a large-windowed façade, was to become a model for the neighbourhood kindergartens and aimed to satisfy the health as well as aesthetic needs of the socialist city⁶.

From the end of the 1920s, however, with the advent of Stalinism, the political system became totalitarian in the sense that it imposed decisions through coercion, terror and violence. Among the later legislative interventions concerning childcare services was the decree of 27 June 1936 of the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars: "On the prohibition of abortions and on the increase of material assistance to women during childbirth, the institution of state assistance to large families, the expansion of the network of maternity hospitals, day nurseries, the strengthening of criminal sanctions for non-payment of alimony and some changes to the divorce law"⁷.

This decree, which established a return to a more traditional conception of the family, expressed an authoritarian policy that implied an invasion of the private lives of women, although officially it wanted to support their emancipation. In the best day nurseries, built in 1936–1937, however, oth-

⁵ D. Caroli, *L'enfance abandonnée et délinquante dans la Russie soviétique (1917–1937)*, Préf. de Jutta Scherrer, Parigi, L'Harmattan, 2004.

⁶ N.A. Miliutin, *Iasli*, in «Sovetskaia Arhitektura», 5/5 (1932), pp. 81–104.

⁷ Caroli, *Day Nurseries and Childcare in Europe, 1800–1939*, cit., pp. 267–293.

er institutions such as maternity wards, clinics, infant hospitals and baby homes were set up. The situation of women did not improve either, since the labour legislation of this period involved differential treatment of workers and exclusion and/or dismissal in the absence of political conditions of various kinds⁸.

Comparing this to the mother and child protection policy of the 1930s, scholar David L. Hoffmann states:

although the Soviet effort to glorify motherhood resembled pronatalist propaganda in other countries, it was distinguished in one crucial way. The Soviet government encouraged and expected women to continue working while pregnant and after giving birth. To ensure that pregnant women could find or maintain jobs outside the home, the Politburo approved a decree in October 1936 that made it a criminal offence to refuse to hire or to lower the pay of women during pregnancy. The Soviet construction of gender emphasized women's roles as both workers and mothers and denied any contradiction between the two⁹.

The purpose of this chapter is therefore to analyse some of the main features of the system of services for children both from an organizational point of view and from its educational context, which will reveal a slow process of de-Stalinization. Totalitarian management, following the repression of paedology, which had been rejected as a "false science" in 1936, had imposed, above all, attention to the health aspect and ideological content, often devoid of educational activities that corresponded to the age of the children and the different stages of development.

The joint analysis of archival documents and some articles published in the journal *Preschool Education* (*Doshkol'noe vospitanie*) shows that the preschool education system that was created did not favour, at least in the following twenty years, a complete reconciliation between the work of the woman and the family, contrary to the image of the propaganda. The continuity of the pre-war reforms was only an appearance. The analysis of these preschool institutions reveals a more complex situation than a real and effective emancipation of women from their traditional role or the communist education of young children. In the period under consideration, it is possible to observe two main phases.

⁸ D. Caroli, *Histoire de la protection sociale en Union soviétique (1919–1939)*. Préf. de R. Sani, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2010.

⁹ D.L. Hoffmann, *Cultivating the Masses. Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914–1939*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2011, pp. 143–156 (p. 147).

In the first phase (roughly 1945–1955), day nurseries were exclusively the responsibility of the Ministry of Health (as it was called from 1944), which set about reopening these institutions. Their number increased significantly, although the numerous government interventions did not solve the problem of the lack of buildings and staff. The number of day nurseries was reduced, and a new trend began of combining them with kindergartens in institutions called day-nursery-kindergartens (*iasli-sady*). In the second phase, from the mid-1950s to the end of the 1970s, the management of day nurseries underwent another important change. In fact, one can observe the gradual union of day nurseries and kindergartens to create a preschool system, with a consequent decrease in the number of nurseries. In this sense, Decree No. 1287 of 28 July 1959 “On measures for the further development of educational institutions, the improvement of education and medical care of preschool children”, established the presence of *kindergarten* (*detskie sady*), which in some case were already functioning in the education system managed by the Ministry of Education. Consequently, these services, initially under the Ministry of Health, saw greater intervention from the Ministry of Education, which was responsible for organizing new educational institutions and developing methods that guaranteed continued education until the child entered school at the age of seven years.

The second part presents the debate over the development of educational methods for children of different age groups, which also provided a theoretical basis for training staff who had become impoverished after the repression of paedology. It was similar to what happened to Italian day nurseries (*nidi*), which could not renew their educational methods following Montessori’s emigration in 1934. In the Soviet Union, at first, there was an interest in the conceptions of psychology that had been developed before the war, in particular the Pavlovian theory of conditioned reflexes that conceived education as a set of stimuli that effectively conditioned the behaviour of young children in different stages of development. Attention to the development of children’s language also emerged, which can be traced back to some principles of the Soviet “historical-cultural” school founded by the famous psychologist Lev S. Vygotsky (1896–1934). From the late 1960s and early 1970s, the progressive theories prohibited during Stalinism began to circulate and a plurality of methods and theories that were more attentive to the individual psychological development of the child began to emerge.

1. *Offshoots of communism: the institutional and legislative reform of the second post-war period*

The history of day nurseries in the war years and in the years immediately following it is characterized by a reduction in these childcare institutions, although back in 1942 there had already been an increase in infant institutions organized by industries in remote areas (Ural and Siberia, Dal'ne-Vostok and Volga). These day nurseries, like those opened after 1944 in the liberated cities, were set in buildings that were unsuitable from a sanitary point of view, particularly in the destroyed cities of Stalingrad, Rostov-on-Don, Sevastopol and Novorossiysk. In addition, due to the decrease in births, places were left empty in the day nurseries and many of them had to be closed. In any case, 95 per cent of the day nurseries were reopened after the end of the war. In 1945, there were 4,689 day nurseries with 329,900 places available for the reception of children and, despite the elimination of 11,000 places in the day nurseries, as of 1 January 1948, the cities of the Russian Republic had 4,754 day nurseries with 314,200 places. In order to restore the number of places in the nurseries, 154 kindergartens, with 10,716 places, were planned to be built that year¹⁰.

Generally, the conditions in the day nurseries were not very good. Many things needed to organize activities suitable for children – beds, tables, mattresses, blankets, linens and dishes – were missing. Even essentials for childcare and medical care were lacking. There was no modern anthropometric equipment for measuring the height of children. In almost all the day nurseries, children up to one year old wore clothes from their homes, because the day nurseries were not able to supply them with uniforms¹¹.

The number of places available doesn't indicate a generalized reception for the whole day of children up to three years of age: 56 per cent of these places were reserved for children whose mothers were workers, so that they could work any shift. In the case that they couldn't take care of their child at home, mothers could place their children in the child's home, where children without a parent were usually placed¹². The remaining 44 per cent of places were occupied by the children of office workers in various sectors and of peasants. It was estimated that children up to one year of age took up about 30 per cent of the total places, while those over three years of age took up 23.3 per cent. The differences in age between children pushed the local

¹⁰ *Svodka o sostoianii obsluzhivaniia detei v iasliakh gorodov i promysh. centrov RSFSR (1947–1948)*, A-482, op. 47, delo 8624, ll. 1-2.

¹¹ *Ivi*, l. 4.

¹² *Ivi*, l. 6.

authorities (namely the Ministry of Health) to create adequate conditions for childcare¹³. The remainder consisted of two–three-year-old children.

A new edition of the textbook for day nurseries was printed very soon after WWII. The authors were specialists who had already published similar textbooks before the war. Also, the establishment of the World Health Organisation on 7 April 1948 may have been an important element in pushing to improve the health of the child afterwards the war years. Children were also entitled to wellbeing from the first months of life under Soviet social policy, which pursued the general wellbeing of its citizens. In 1948, Mariana Iu. Kistiakovskaia and Revekka Ia. Fridman published the *Textbook for the Education of Children in Infant-Toddler Centres and Children's Homes* (*Rukovodstvo po vospitaniu detei v iasliakh i domakh rebenka*)¹⁴, which distinguished two educational services for children, nurseries and homes of the child: the first offered day care, the second weekly care. In the day nurseries, which are the institutions of interest here, children went from being in custody in their first months to the educational, playful, musical-motor activities of the day nurseries¹⁵. The textbook also took into consideration the importance of a good relationship with parents so that they too would contribute to the proper care of their child.

The following year, Frida Markovna Ilupina (1898–1987), a member of the local health administration of Ivanovo and later of the Institute of Health Organization and History of Medicine named after N.A. Semashko, published the long essay *A Kindergarten at the Service of the Worker*, which described the various aspects of the functioning of nurseries¹⁶. In the first part, Ilupina presented data relating to the availability of nursery places for the children of textile workers in the Ivanovo region (as of 1 January 1949 there were 11,450 places in the region), stating that 20 per cent of the entire health budget was spent on maintaining day nurseries. In the second part, Ilupina stated that the nursery had to develop socialization skills in the children. The staff had to be in constant contact with future mothers, as well as their families, during pregnancy, through a system of home visits (with the help of a nurse). In this sense, Ilupina also underlined:

Mothers who send their children to kindergarten must be engaged in their education, transferring the methods of the nursery and organizing the life of a

¹³ *Ivi*, ll. 13–14.

¹⁴ M.Iu. Kistiakovskaia, R.Ja. Fridman, *Rukovodstvo po vospitaniu detei v iasliakh i domakh rebenka*, ed. by M.D. Kovriginoj, N.M. Shchelovanova, N.M. Aksarinoi, Akademiia med. Nauk SSSR, Moskva, Izd. Akademii meditsinskikh Nauk SSSR, 1948.

¹⁵ *Ivi*, pp. 32–33.

¹⁶ F.M. Ilupina, *Detskie iasli na sluzhbe rabotnits*, Ivanovo, Oblgiz, 1949, p. 8.

child in the most appropriate way possible in the family environment. The child spends most of his time at home, in the family itself. Only with uniform guidelines in nursery and family education can the correct development of the child be ensured¹⁷.

The organizational and educational issues Ilupina analysed were important in the development of the day nurseries, although the gap between good intentions and reality remained clearly visible. The improvement of these institutions came in small steps, based on the interventions by the government and in particular the Ministry of Health. During 1950, the day nursery places in rural localities were only 72.6 per cent filled due to the lack of adequate general conditions. The buildings did not meet the sanitary standards. As for internal organization, children were not separated into groups, there was no isolation room, food was scarce because the supply was irregular, and there was no necessary linen¹⁸. As of 1 January 1951, there were 5,795 day nurseries with 151,140 children in agricultural localities, with an average of twenty-six children for each childcare institution. Among these institutions, 1,318, with 42,371 places, were located in district centres, while almost double, 2,439 (56,859 places) were in the nurseries of collective farms (*sovchozy*). This meant that the district centre institutions averaged thirty-two children, while those in collective companies averaged 23¹⁹. In the following years, there was a progressive growth in both urban and rural locations: by 1955, there were a total of 474,220 places, of which 322,740 were in cities and 151,480 were in the countryside²⁰.

During the mid-1950s, two new textbooks for nurseries and kindergartens were published: the second edition of *The Guide for the Education of Children in day nurseries and Homes* (*Rukovodstvo po vospitaniuu detei v iasliakh i domakh rebenka*) edited by Nina M. Aksarina, Maria D. Kovrigina and Nikolai M. Shchelovanov came out in 1957 (the first edition had been published in 1948), and the *Guide to Education in the Kindergarten* (*Rukovodstvo dlia vospitaniia deskogo sada*) edited by M.V. Zaluzhskaia was published in 1954²¹.

¹⁷ *Ivi*, p. 43.

¹⁸ *Kratkaia spravka o sostoianii raboty iaslei v sel'skoj mestnosti / raitsentrov i sovchozov*, A-482, op. 49, delo 3989, ll. 28-31.

¹⁹ *Ivi*, l. 30.

²⁰ *Otchet o rabote otдела-iaslei i domov rebenka Minzdrava RSFSR za 1955 god*, A-482, op. 50, delo 1822, ll. 11-13.

²¹ Kistiakovskaia, Fridman, *Rukovodstvo po vospitaniuu detei v iasliakh i domakh rebenka*, cit.; N.M. Aksarina, M.D. Kovrigina, N.M. Shchelovanov (eds.), *Rukovodstvo po*

In fact, a great variety of events were unfolding, especially in rural areas. In remote rural locations such as the Volga, Siberia, Altai and Kazakhstan, the opening of day nurseries was also intended to combat infant mortality, especially during the summer. Funded by collective companies (*sovchozy*), day nurseries were created with more than twenty-five children, with two or three groups of children depending on age. In large collective farms, day nurseries operated year-round, while in small farms they only operated for six–seven months, when peasant women were engaged in agricultural work. On the other hand, in many regions – such as Irbit'sk, Kaliningrad, Kaluga, Kurgan, Saratov, Rostov, Tambov, Chita (of the Transbaikalia region), the region of Altai and the Republics of Dagestan and Tatarstan – plans to build childcare services were delayed²².

From the mid-1950s, the organization of Day Nurseries and kindergartens in general still suffered from a lack of means and personnel, whether in urban localities, near industrial areas or in rural areas. These problems led to the merger of day nurseries with kindergartens to create the so-called *kombinaty* (that is combinations of preschool institutions), which joined two institutions, combining the care and education aspects. This phenomenon, which became more and more widespread, caused organizational problems in the following years.

The expansion of the network of day nurseries and kindergartens was foreseen in the seven-year economic development plan of the USSR, adopted at the XXI Congress of the Communist Party (Moscow, 27 January to 5 February 1959), but the actual construction of new day nurseries was small. The large number of children cared for in the family meant that the family too had to be invested in with a special programme.

Three main aspects were taken up to improve care in nurseries and kindergartens.

The first concerned the role of the staff in day nurseries and kindergartens, who also had to become organizers of parent groups so that common principles were established in the institutions and at home, such as maintaining hygienic and sanitary conditions and ways of developing children's speech, thinking and play. The second concerned the children's counselling centres, which were to become important institutions and were to train peo-

vospitaniu detei v iasliakh i domakh rebenka, Moskva, Medgiz, 1957, 2nd ed. by M.V. Zaluzhskaia, *Rukovodstvo dlia vospitaniia deskogo sada*, Moskva, Uchpedgiz, 1954.

²² See the text of Provision «On the measures for the further development of educational institutions, the improvement of education and medical care of preschool children» (*O merakh po dal'neishemu razvitiu detskikh doshkol'nikh uchrezhdenii, uluchsheniui vospitaniia i meditsinskogo obsluzhivaniia detei doshkol'no vozrasta ot iuliiia 1959*), «www.consultant.ru» (retrieved on 15/10/2018).

ple in the “profession of parenting”. It was necessary to organize pedagogical points so that the parents could be instructed in the education of children, creating a unique educational system. The third aspect concerned the organization of training for personnel specialized in the care of children. Pedagogical institutes were required to adequately train staff. There was an improvement in the training of nurses-educators for kindergartens and children’s homes thanks to courses held locally by health institutions on very early childhood. Some municipal medical centres in Moscow and the departments of health organized training courses for nurse-educators, who had had a middle education. These courses, in addition to the medical and biological disciplines, included 296 hours of early childhood education²³.

From this perspective, provision no. 1287 of 28 July 1959 “On the measures for the further development of educational institutions, the improvement of education and medical care of preschool children” (*O merakh po dal’neishemu razvitiu detskikh doshkol’nikh uchrezhdenii, uluchsheniui vospitaniia i meditsinskogo obsluzhivaniia detei doshkol’no vozrasta ot iul’ia 1959*), promulgated by the Presidency of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Council of Ministers of the Russian Republic at the beginning of the first seven-year plan (1959–1965), represented a very important legislative act. The text of the law reported that 2,390,000 children were in day nurseries (although in reality there were fewer), and provided for the construction of nursery schools and preschool institutions for children of two age groups (two months–three years and three–seven years) in order to better rationalize the local infrastructure to protect women’s work.

To carry out the seven-year planning of the construction of kindergartens, the provision delegated the executive committees of local authorities (Councils of People’s Deputies) to open them, while industrial enterprises, various institutions, state farms and collective farms were put in charge of financing. The implementation of this provision would have meant double management, as the local health authorities were responsible for the prevention and health part, while the local administration of the educational sector oversaw the pedagogical direction.

According to this normative act, the realization of the planned construction of day nurseries depended on the local (industrial and agricultural) enterprises that, due to the presence of different production sectors (textile, mechanical or food for example) or regional discrepancies, would have provided for their financing very differently. A study of the Kursk region demonstrates that since 1951 seasonal day nurseries for the workers of Soviet agricultural and collective farms had been organized, as planned

²³ *Ibidem*.

by the provision of 29 March 1951, when the distribution of subsidies to mothers (under the 1 January 1948 arrangement) began to be effective and the opening of nurseries and kindergartens also showed an increase over the previous five years²⁴. Compared to the fourteen with 1,043 places in 1959, in 1964 there were eighteen day nurseries and day-nursery-kindergartens with 1,815 places. Typically, only the companies that contributed to financing had these childcare institutions²⁵. Again, it can be assumed that female workers adopted alternative solutions to care for children up to three years of age while they were at work.

The tendency to combine day nurseries and kindergartens into institutions called *kombinaty* led to their organization being united to form mixed institutions (in the sense of the age of the children), which posed a series of problems that were dealt with several times during the 1960s. Among the most important were the division of children into groups, educational continuity and staff training. Of the cases of *kombinaty* that arose at the local level, that of the agricultural production sector of Moscow is particularly interesting. A report by the inspector of the Social Insurance Council evaluated the functioning of the *kombinat* organized in the agricultural area of this region. The inspector stated that alongside the kindergartens, the birth of these particular institutions was inevitable in agricultural localities, where there are small enterprises (of the type of artisanal production cooperatives), because, given the small number of children, the construction and maintenance of day nurseries and kindergartens as one institution was more advantageous²⁶.

From her description, it emerges that the merger of some institutions (day nurseries and kindergartens) was indeed convenient from a territorial point of view, while also posing a number of problems. In fact, the unified management of these institutions had many advantages in organizing age-appropriate educational activities, especially in the event that the person in charge of the *kombinat* was a pedagogue. Thus:

a single line would be established in the education of the child from nursery age to school. Educators would know the individual characteristics of all children. By having constant contact with medical staff, pedagogues would have

²⁴ N.N. Koroteeva, M.S. Golubitskii, *Politika Sovetskogo gosudarstva v sfere okhrany materinstva i detstva v 1950-60-e gody (Na materiale Kurskoi oblasti)*, in «Izvestiia Iugo-Zapadnogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta. Serii Istorii i Pravo», I/18 (2016), pp. 93-98 (p. 96).

²⁵ *Ivi*, p. 94.

²⁶ L. Ostrovskaia, *Ob 'edinennye doshkol'nye uchrezhdeniia v sel'skoi mestnosti*, in «Doshkol'noe vospitanie», 8 (1959), pp. 11-12.

more conscious and attentive attitudes towards the physical development of the child. For their part, the nurses (*meditsinskie sestry*) who work with children of nursery age would receive some pedagogical knowledge, would deal with the personality of each child [and] would acquire the working methods of the educator²⁷.

In addition to educational continuity, the unified management also had other advantages, such as the opportunity to gain experience in the education of children of different preschool ages and the facilitated transition from one institution to another, making the shift from one group to another “painless” for the child. It would also make contact with parents easier, as they would have an exchange with the same person for seven years. In collaboration with the staff and educators, the manager could learn about the family’s lifestyle, and more particularly the way the mother and father worked for the education of their children. In this sense, the best combined institutions in the Moscow region were those of the “Luch” farms in Moscow, Zagorsk, Mitrochinsk and Pechorsk.

However, the introduction of a single management had to address different needs related to the different ages of children and staff. As regards the first aspect, it was necessary to divide the children into groups; in most of the *kombinaty*, there were two or three groups of children, all of mixed ages. In the day nursery age group (15–20 children) there were children aged from a few months up to 3 years and the preschool age group was three–seven years. There was a need for a further subdivision of the preschool age group and probably also in the day nursery age group for two reasons: to guarantee a real education (unlike the custody of seasonal institutions) and to protect them from colds and infectious diseases both during activities within the institutions and during walks.

Food preparation was another complex element of these combined institutions, as they had to prepare three–four menus for children of different ages (from four months to one year through feeding bottles, ground baby food up to two years and preschool nutrition).

Staff remuneration was another problem because, the two different state institutions (the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education) had two different statutes, with different methods, wages and instructions. Generally, though, the most important staff problem was the lack of adequate training. The high turnover of managers and the poor training of nurses-educators meant nurseries could not always function well. Generally, the day nurseries had nurses without pedagogical training. In fact, they needed expert educators with pedagogical training, who would combine experience,

²⁷ *Ivi*, p. 11.

professional intuition and knowledge of child psychology. When the staff had medical training, they neglected the education of healthy children, instead taking care of those with health problems. These issues revealed the urgency of staff training for pedagogical activity in a unified preschool institution²⁸.

This problem revealed the need for staff specialization in daytime medical institutions for young children accepting various age groups. The inspector stressed that there was still no specialized pedagogy for this age group in preschool training institutes. It was necessary to convene conferences of various types of infantile institutions and entities for the definition of plans and tasks to be completed immediately²⁹.

The problems that occurred in the *kombinaty* of the Moscow region were representative of the general situation, particularly when it came to the continuity and training of care and education personnel. The continuity between the preschool institutions required more qualified staff in the different age groups and the reform of the elementary school in 1958 had raised the question of a better connection between schools and the surrounding society³⁰. The following year, the first of the seven-year plan (1959–1965), there was also an important recovery with an increase in the number of these institutions: compared to the 751,890 children who were welcomed into Russian kindergartens in 1940, in 1959, there were more than 1.5 million³¹.

As S.V. Iakovlev highlighted in an article published the following year, early childhood education was one of the main pedagogical tasks of this post-war planning phase. He believed that the deployment of the network of children's institutions resulting from the increase in funding had drawn greater scientific attention to the development of methods for the education of preschool children (see also the second part of this chapter). However, he noted that the joint management of the education of children of infant and preschool age had been affected both theoretically and practically by the management of the two ministries that had not agreed on this educational continuity, i.e. the passage of children from one institution to the next (kindergarten).

He observed that the two textbooks for the staff of nurseries and kindergartens published in previous years had not solved some problems of the

²⁸ *Ivi*, pp. 12–13.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ L. Coumel, “*Rapprocher l'école et la vie*”? *Une histoire des réformes et de l'enseignement en Russie soviétique (1918–1964)*, Toulouse, Presses universitaires du Mirail, 2014, pp. 65–74.

³¹ S.V. Iakovlev, *O edinoj sisteme vospitaniia detei predshkol'nogo i doshkol'nogo vozrasta*, in «*Doshkol'noe vospitanie*», 1 (1960), pp. 12–15.

passage of children from one institution to another. Among the aspects that prevented educational continuity, and which were real inconsistencies between the two textbooks published in the 1950s, were, for example, the poor skills of children in language development, the organization of routines and hygiene habits. As regards the first question, the language development of children in the nurseries was lower than that required in the kindergartens.

In the day nurseries, children did not develop enough conversation skills, most likely due to the insufficiency of stimulating and socialization activities between the educator and the children or among the children themselves. For this reason, the level demanded by kindergarten educators for children transferred from day nurseries to kindergartens seemed too high. As for the daily routine, and in particular the hours of sleep, 12–13 hours of sleep per day were expected in the day nurseries for children up to three years old, while for the group of children in the kindergarten, it was 14 hours, forcing three-year-olds to sleep two more hours in the kindergarten. Finally, the children who arrived from the day nurseries into the groups of small children in the kindergarten already knew how to use cutlery for eating, so it was not necessary to pay particular attention to this³².

In practice, therefore, the staff of the day nurseries did not always prepare children for moving to kindergarten. Despite the inconsistencies in the textbooks, the move towards the formation of a single education system for young and preschool-aged children had to continue and grow, thanks to the merger of day nurseries and kindergartens into a single institution, as well as in the light of the 1958 reform “On strengthening the link between school and life”. The development of a unique method of educational continuity based on theoretical results in specialized pedagogy for these age groups was important for the growth of the child until the age of seven.

This was explained by the poor qualifications of the staff. Iakovlev stressed that middle and higher pedagogical institutes prepared educators for kindergartens but should have introduced early age pedagogy (*pedagogika predoshkol'nogo vozrasta*) in order to also prepare nursery staff. Furthermore, he suggested concentrating the pedagogical and methodical direction of the unified preschool institutions in the ministries of education of the various republics. Local health institutions should have taken care of the health aspect of the nurseries, compliance with the hygiene rules in the institutions for children and the increasing number of medical staff and the improving of their skills.

During the 1960s, the government and the Health Commissioner faced the problems of structural deficiencies in day nurseries and kindergartens. The opening of preschool institutions privileged nursery–kindergartens to

³² *Ivi*, p. 14.

the detriment of actual nurseries, especially due to the lack of health personnel. The general tendency was to support day-nursery-kindergartens and local administrations tried to work in this direction, although it was not possible to observe specific dynamics at the administrative level³³.

The implementation of the 1959 law encountered local disparities among the various regions from the point of view of the organization of the nurseries and their merger with the kindergartens. Some local health sections did not have the means or did not distribute them adequately to the day nurseries. In others, the lack of collaboration between the two local administrations (health and education) had not merged the day nurseries and kindergartens into a single educational system, and in general the nurseries had not been put under the purview of the local education authorities.

During the all-Russian conference of 28 February 1963, in which the Deputy Minister of Health participated, along with the heads of companies, the communist Party, social organizations, agricultural economics and planning, it emerged that in some cities such as Sverdlovsk the nurseries carried out some educational activities. The day nurseries had not yet been merged with the kindergartens nor had they been transferred to the local education administration³⁴. In this region, between 1961 and 1963, the health conditions of children up to one year of age had worsened. In the day nurseries of the city, the average weight of the children had dropped from 11.6 kg to 8.8 kg and finally to 5.6 kg. In the countryside, however, conditions were better, with only a slight deterioration from 21.7 kg to 19.5 kg and to 18 kg. In the day-nursery-kindergartens, children up to one year of age held 2 per cent of places, but many day nurseries had none at all, and they waited up to a year to a year and a half before being assisted³⁵.

These statistics, which were not isolated, reveal not only a difference in the health conditions of the children, but also the fact that there was no correspondence between the end of the working woman's maternity leave and the child's entry into the institutions. Although improvement was noted in some regions, these two problems persisted for another ten years or so. During 1963, for example, in the Vologda region, some improvements were noted in the day nurseries – the day nurseries were equipped for daily activities and toys were provided, although the educational ones were not regular and little attention was paid to drawing. Younger children were neglected

³³ See for example Y. Gorlitzki, O. Khlevniuk, *Substate Dictatorship. Networks, Loyalty, and Institutional Change in the Soviet Union*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2020.

³⁴ *Tezisy vystupleniia* R. Malyshevoi, A-482, op. 50, delo 8518, ll. 24-25.

³⁵ *Iz sparvki o vypolnenii post. N. 1287 ot 28.7.59* 2 «O merakh po dal'neishemu razvitiu doshkol' uchrezhdenii po Sverdlovskoi oblasti», A-482, op. 50, delo 9643, l. 122.

in favour of older ones. The educational activity was well organized when there was an educator who specialized in music alongside the educating nurses. There were shortcomings from the point of view of the relationship with peers and the development of incorrect and disconnected language³⁶.

In 1964, the magazine *Izvestiia* published an article titled *The Little Child Asks to Speak (Slovo prosit malysh)*, in which it was emphasized that it was difficult for parents to find a place in nursery groups that had been merged with kindergartens. The availability of places in day nurseries per 100 workers compared to 1940 had dropped from 5.2 to 4.8, compared to the 8.6 required by law for urban locations. The reason was that the local administrations had neglected this sector: few buildings had been built for day nurseries and not enough construction had been planned. In general, the children's institutions did not respect hygiene rules: children were gathered in groups of 25–30 (compared to the regulation of 15–20), the buildings were not suitable, there were no verandas for exposure to open air, isolation rooms, gymnastics rooms or service rooms³⁷. There was also a lack of medical staff in the children's institutions, and nurses were not trained to work in these institutions. For lack of places, children up to one year of age waited and were left at home with whoever happened to be available, perhaps schoolchildren, who did not look after them suitably. Nonetheless, the local department of education did not welcome children aged over 12 months, giving them priority over the older children aged one year and half or two³⁸.

The problem of the lack of places in the day nurseries led to various solutions, including that of a closer connection between day nurseries and kindergartens, as already described. This connection, which made it possible to free up places in the nurseries, facilitated the transfer of children from two years of age from the nurseries to the kindergartens, where there were also groups of children under the age of three years.

In 1964, a conference was organized in Moscow on the transfer of groups of children from the age of two from nurseries to educational institutions. During this conference, the local authority acknowledged that in Moscow the local staff had proposed accepting children from two years of age into the kindergartens and transforming the day-nursery-kindergartens into kindergartens. This solution had not solved the problem of creating places in the day nurseries. In fact, the crèches did not accept children up to one year

³⁶ *Iz otchetov o vypolnenii prikaza N. 270/254 ot 5 avgusta 1963g., Vologodskaia oblast'*, A-482, op. 50, delo 9645, ll. 220, 224.

³⁷ *Spravka po stat'e Kius «Slovo prosit malysh», napechatannoi v gazete «Izvestiia» ot 12.05.1964g.*, A-482, op. 50, delo 9643, ll. 38-39.

³⁸ *Ivi*, l. 40.

of age because they could not guarantee health care for this age group. To this end, the local health section was initiating staff training³⁹.

However, in the city of Moscow, for example, the lack of places in the day nurseries was also because of the habit of accepting and assisting children separately in the two institutions to complete the places available: children up to two years were taken into the day nurseries and those from two to seven years old were accepted into the kindergartens, while the latter were supposed to accept children of both age groups. This separation caused a problem for women who worked and had more than two children. At first, in 1966, the Minister of Health intervened to call for a joint completion or filling of places with a view to the educational continuity of the child. This was echoed by the local health authority who stated that the separate completion had caused a difficult situation for access and admission of children into the nurseries⁴⁰, since one ended up giving precedence to the older ones. In this context a sort of vicious cycle arose whereby the lack of places in the day nurseries could not be solved concretely; there were no places or staff for younger children.

As early as 1964, in the Russian Republic, the government adopted a series of measures aimed at increasing the number of available places, improving the staff and consolidating the union of preschool institutions – measures that produced an increase of 10,700 places in day nurseries, 139,100 in kindergartens and 128,000 in merged institutions. In the following years, health authorities transferred 129,000 places to unified institutions run by the local education administration. To improve educational activity, there was a plan to increase the number of educators, establish a sort of patronage of nurseries, better organize the distribution of places for both age groups, move children aged more than three years from day nurseries to the kindergartens, and concentrate the management of the institutes in a single institution⁴¹.

In the Russian Republic, after this transfer of places, at the beginning of 1966, 15,737 day-nursery–kindergartens were organized in which 1,591,600 children up to seven years old were being educated. Although the construction of the day nurseries had been interrupted by a state law, there had been an expansion of the places in the existing day nurseries thanks to the adaptation of the premises of existing institutions. This led to crowding,

³⁹ *Protokol soveshchaniia po voprosu o peredache organam nar. obrazovaniia grupp v iasliakh dlia detei s 2-kh let*, in A-482, op. 50, delo 9643, ll. 44-47.

⁴⁰ *Sovet Ministrov RSFSR na poruchenie N. 6381-396 ot 29.IV.1966g.*, A-482, op. 50, delo 2999, l. 22.

⁴¹ *Zapiska nachal'nogo otдела Minzdrava RSFSR (15 apreliia 1966)*, A-482, op. 50, delo 2999, ll. 25-26.

more intense work for the staff and an increase in infectious diseases in 1960–1965⁴².

Until the end of 1966, new day nurseries were not built either in the capital or other cities of the Russian Republic. At the end of 1966, according to an arrangement made in January 1966, four nurseries were built in the capital for children up to two years of age. A survey conducted at the end of the year revealed that there were no places for young children:

Parents who have children aged from one to three months up to two years do not place them in the day nurseries; instead, they prefer to wait their turn to place the child in the nursery–kindergarten, where he will be educated until school⁴³.

Furthermore, in the newly organized day nurseries, the specialists (paediatricians and educators appointed by the central agencies) found:

organizing the care of twenty children up to one year of age was difficult. Children get tired, cry, and are not cared for quickly and adequately, which has a negative effect on their neuro-physical health. The specialists also note that the completion of day nurseries by two-year-olds and their subsequent transfer to the kindergarten leads to an increase in diseases, since in the period of adaptation to the new institution, children often and for a long time get sick⁴⁴.

Based on these findings, the College of the Ministry of Health and some specialists from the Institute of Preschool Education retraced their steps from the past and decided:

instead of accomplishing the completion of infant institutions, it was preferable to maintain the unique preschool institutions that fully guarantee a fair system of education for children up to school. Considering that a quarter of the crèches are organized by the Ministry [of Health], the minister considers it possible to resolve their future business by making them into infantile *kombinaty*⁴⁵.

⁴² *Gosplan RRSFR (8 ianvaria 1966g.), O razvittii seti det. doshk. uchrezhdenii (po postanovleniiu SM. SSSR N. 558). Zapiska Ministra zdr. RSFSR, V. Trofimova, A-482, op. 54, delo 3, ll. 77-78.*

⁴³ *Porucheniiia SM SSSR i RSFSR o lech. prof. pomoshchi detiam i materi i dok-nty po ikh vypolneniiu, ianvar'-dekabr' 1966 goda, A-482, op. 54, delo 3, l. 47.*

⁴⁴ *Ibidem.*

⁴⁵ *Ivi, l. 49.*

This problem of the lack of places in the day nurseries and the completion of infantile institutions (usually nursery schools) was also widespread in the other regions. The poor living conditions of the children in the day nurseries had also caused below-average physical development (in the city of Krasnoiarsk). In such cases, it was probably the children of single mothers who had no choice: in order to work they had to accept the local service, even if it was poor.

To meet the needs of agricultural work for women, the provision of 10 October 1965 "On improving the activity of kolkhozes' preschool institutions" was issued, but its implementation was not so rapid and did not correspond to the planning figures, as in the case of the agricultural region of Kursk, which had to find different solutions to deal with the lack of buildings. With regard to the plan drawn up in 1969 to open 1,144 seasonal childcare institutions for 32,000 children in the region, the farms allocated the funds to build forty-nine childcare institutions. Another 859 institutions were built to accommodate 20,290 children; of these, 43 per cent were seasonal and housed in purpose-built buildings (compared to 40.3 per cent in 1968), 44.3 per cent were in adapted buildings, and 12.7 per cent were in private homes (compared to 15 per cent in 1968). Fifteen buildings had been built, and thirty-four were under construction⁴⁶.

In the following years, the steady increase in the number of children accepted reflected the general improvement in the living conditions of the population in the 1970s. In the summer of 1965, there were 3.9 million children up to six years of age in seasonal institutions. At the end of 1965, there were 62,000 institutions for children (*crèches*, day-nursery-kindergartens and kindergartens), which educated 7.7 million children under the age of 7⁴⁷.

In a note dated 8 August 1966, the Minister of Health Vladimir V. Trofimov (1915–1992) stated that since 1967, the central institution in charge of planning (*Gosplan*) should have exclusively planned the development of the network of unified institutions, striving to achieve an increase of 80–85 per cent in the number of places. The minister confirmed that the institutions for children (nurseries and kindergartens) should be filled in a disjoint way (according to the age of the children), stating that it was necessary to plan the increase in the number of children of nursery and kindergarten age

⁴⁶ *Spravki Kurskogo oblzdravotdela o chode vypolneniia prikaza Minzdrava, Min-sel'koza, Minprosveta RSFSR «Ob uluchshenii raboty det. doshk. ucherzhenii kolchozov ot 10.11. 1965» (10 noiabria 1969g.)*, Fond A-482, op. 54, delo 3568, ll. 39–42.

⁴⁷ *V Sovet Ministrov SSSR. O seti i rabote detskikh doshkol'nykh uchrezhdenii (nachal'nik CSU SSSR)*, V. Starovskii (6 iuliia 1996g.), A-482, op. 54, delo 3.

separately; with 36–38 per cent of places for children up to three years and 62–64 per cent for those from three to seven years⁴⁸.

In 1977, the Soviet Union boasted nearly 73,000 childcare institutions, including nearly 9 million children up to seven years of age. The process of merging nurseries and kindergartens had almost certainly achieved better results in the access and education of the children – the staff was more trained and competent and, undoubtedly in the context of the improvement of economic conditions, the quality of the day-nursery-kindergartens improved and became more age appropriate.

2. *New educational methods for the day nurseries*

In the history of nursery schools after the Second World War, the case of the Soviet Union is unique as one can observe the transformation of day nurseries into educational institutions as early as the 1920s thanks to the elaboration of educational methods that corresponded with the developmental stages of children under the age of three years. In fact, after the October Revolution, day nurseries distinguished themselves from contemporary European nurseries because they offered educational activities specially developed for different age groups. This was made possible thanks to the studies of the psycho-pedagogy of infant development, known as paedology (*pedologiia*), which developed considerably because it had to offer the theoretical basis for the reform of the Soviet school and education system.

Already in the mid-1920s, educational, play and motor activities that were very stimulating for the growth and psycho-physical wellbeing of children in the various stages of growth were organized in the nurseries. Furthermore, for the good health and growth of the child, the staff had to cultivate better relationships with parents, so that the family could guarantee appropriate home conditions⁴⁹.

There were numerous experiments that tried to adopt very innovative psycho-pedagogical methods to educate children. For this reason, Soviet propaganda claimed, the Soviet Union was the homeland of happy childhoods. The repression of paedology in 1936 was the culmination of a totalitarian policy that, by the second half of the 1920s, had proved hostile to psychoanalysis and involved the removal of paedologists from educational

⁴⁸ Gosplan RRSFR (8 ianvaria 1966g.), *O razvitii seti det. doshk. uchrezhdenii (po posta. SM. SSSR N. 558). Zapiska Ministra zdr. RSFSR*, V. Trofimova, A-482, op. 54, delo 3, l. 79.

⁴⁹ Caroli, *Day Nurseries and Childcare in Europe, 1800–1939*, cit., pp. 274–280.

institutions and a ban on the circulation of more than one hundred published works on paedology.

Among the books prohibited by the 1936 provision were, for example, Lev S. Vygotsky, *Pedagogical Psychology. Short Course* (*Pedagogicheskaja psichologiya. Kratkii kurs*, 1926) and the *Fundamentals of Paedology* (*Osnovy pedologii*, 1935), fundamental works in the “historical-cultural” school of psychology. According to Vygotsky’s conception,

brain maturation, interaction with the environment, the evolution of brain functions and development of psychological functions were closely interconnected. It was therefore logical that attention should be placed on language, given the central role it plays in the complex of its psychic functions⁵⁰.

According to Vygotsky, the higher psychic functions manifest themselves first in the context of social activities, then through the mediation of language and finally as thought understood as an individual activity⁵¹.

The list also included *Early Childhood Paedology* (*Pedologiya rannego detstva*, 1932) by Arnold Gesell (1880–1961)⁵², which dealt with the observation of the stages of maturation of the young child and would help to develop new educational strategies taking into account the stages of the child’s development. The reasons for the repression were various. Among these, there was the interest in the individuality of the child in its stages of development, which according to Marxist psychology had to be interpreted in a neurophysiological key, not through psychoanalysis (and its method of study of psychopathologies), as, for example, the unconscious or the Oedipus complex were unacceptable to Marxist psychology⁵³.

The interruption of these studies and experiments caused the lack of adequate pedagogy for day nurseries and the progress of children from the day nursery to the kindergarten. Inevitably, this also had repercussions on

⁵⁰ A. Angelini, *La psicoanalisi in Russia. Dai precursori agli anni trenta*. Pref. di Cesare Musatti, Napoli, Liguori, 1988, p. 117.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

⁵² D. Caroli, *Koncepciia vospitaniia besprizornykh detei pedologa Stepana Stepanovicha Molozhavogo i repressiia pedagogii (1924-1937), so spiskom zapreshchenykh knig po pedagogii (1936)/ The conception of education of the abandoned children by Stepan Stepanovich Molozhavi and the repression of the pedagogy (1924-1937), with a list of the forbidden books about pedagogy (1936)*, in «Istoriko-pedagogicheskii zhurnal», IX (2019), pp. 90-95.

⁵³ A. Etkind, *Eros of the Impossible. The History of the Psychoanalysis in Russia*, transl. by N. and M. Rubins, Boulder Colorado, WestviewPress/HarperCollins, 1997, pp. 259-263.

the training of personnel who did not have specializations. However, it can be assumed that the legacy of Vygotsky's pedological concepts and "historical-cultural" school was still present in some scientific circles. In the first year of the war, 1940, a collection of essays entitled *Methodology of Language Development of Children in Nurseries*⁵⁴ was published under the direction of Nina M. Aksarina and Nikolai M. Schelovanov, specialists at the Ministry of Health. Also significant is the collection by V. Fediaevskaia, *To Small Children (Malym detiam, 1944)*, published in Kazan to develop children's language skills: from age 2, they could understand the meaning with the help of poems accompanied by the movement of the hand palms and from the 3, they could also repeat the words. In fact, a repertoire of genres suitable for this age was also published, which, using repetition and rhyme, facilitated the memorization and articulation of language even among non-Russian children⁵⁵.

Immediately after the war, in 1947, Revekka Iakovlevna Fridman published the treatise *The Development of Behaviour and Education of Children from 9–10 Months to 1 Year and 6 Months*, under the direction of Aksarina and Schelovanov. Fridman was the editor of the first nursery textbook published under the aegis of the Institute of Paediatrics of the Academy of Medical Sciences of the Ministry of Health (in particular, the Methodology Centre of Management of Healthcare and Prophylaxis Institutions of the Ministry of Health). The treatise started from the motor skills of children aged nine–ten months, which they made interesting as an "object of education". In addition, the understanding of language and the contact that was established with adults helped children orient themselves in the surrounding environment⁵⁶. This meant that the environment had to facilitate their growth with age-appropriate activities and games.

Between the last phase of Stalinism and the first years of de-Stalinization, in fear of new waves of dismissals and purges related to paedology, many psychologists and doctors took the starting point for the study of infantile behaviour as a psychological conception that referred to Pavlovian reflexology. According to the psychophysiological conception of the reflex-

⁵⁴ E.K. Kaverina, V.A. Petrova, G.L. Rozengart, *Metodika razvitiia rechi detei v iasliakh*, pod red. N.M. Aksarinoi, N.M. Schelovanova, Moskva, Narkomzdrav SSSR Gosizdat Meditsinskoi Literatury Medgiz, 1940.

⁵⁵ V.M. Fediaevskaia (ed.), *Malym detiam. Sbornik pribautok, shutok, stichov, pesenok, skazok, i rasskazov dlia detei iasel'nogo vozrasta*, Tatgosizdat, Sektor Iunosheskoï i detskoi literatury, Kazan, 1944.

⁵⁶ R.Ia. Fridman, *Razvitie povedeniia i vospitanie detei v vozraste ot 9 / 10 mesiatsev do 1 goda 6 mesiatsev*, pod red. N.M. Shchelovanova, N.M. Aksarinoi, Moskva, Izdanie Instituta Sanitarnogo Prosveshcheniia, 1947, p. 3.

es at an early age, educational mechanisms constituted positive stimuli for the behaviour of children, without considering the role of consciousness as an «active organization of psychic functions», as Vygotsky did⁵⁷.

It is interesting to note that Shchelovanov and Aksarina published in 1949 the second edition of *The Education of Children in the Day Nurseries*, in which they demonstrated their knowledge of the phenomenon of hospitalism (*gospitalizm*) against which, among other things, the staff of the nurseries had been warned as far back as in the 1920s⁵⁸. Most likely, René Spitz's essay on the "hospitalization syndrome"⁵⁹, deepened reflections already known among doctors and which consisted of a syndrome that sparked "anaclitic depression", caused by the lack of maternal care, considered as a consequence of early reception of children in infant institutions. The importance attributed by Spitz to mother-child interaction for the harmonious development of the child's personality certainly made him disliked by Soviet psychologists, who had banned psychoanalysis in the mid-twenties. Regarding this concept, however, Shchelovanov and Aksarina limited themselves to writing that «hospitalism (*gospitalizm*) is the lack of conditions, necessary for the normal life and development of children, which leads to the lack of development of the organism and neuropsychic activity and also to a poor state of health»⁶⁰.

This meant that, according to the two Soviet specialists, it was necessary to guarantee the best developmental conditions to prevent childhood illnesses and growth delays. Although this phenomenon could also manifest itself in day nurseries, it was more frequent in children's homes, where the children remained longer without maternal care. It was therefore necessary to guarantee their good health by creating conditions suitable for their development during the first three months of life. Education had to ensure that a good educational relationship was created between the nurses and the nannies (*sestry i niani*), and the children. According to the standards of a good education, by two years of age, children were expected to be able to communicate, share and exchange toys with others without damaging them⁶¹. Parents with young children also had to be trained. In 1949, Efim A. Arkin (1873–1948), a doctor, psychologist and one of the most important

⁵⁷ Angelini, *La psicoanalisi in Russia. Dai precursori agli anni trenta*, cit., p. 118.

⁵⁸ Caroli, *Day nurseries and childcare in Europe, 1800-1939*, cit., pp. 274-275.

⁵⁹ R.A. Spitz, *Hospitalism—An Inquiry Into the Genesis of Psychiatric Conditions in Early Childhood*, in «Psychoanalytic Study of the Child», 1 (1945), pp. 53-74.

⁶⁰ N.M. Aksarina, N.M. Shchelovanov (Pod red.), *Vospitanie detei v iasliakh. Ucheb-nik dlia shkol'iasel'nikh sester i posobie dlia rabotnikov iaslei*, Moskva-Leningrad, Medgiz, Narkomzdrav, 1939; 1949, 2nd ed., pp. 11-12.

⁶¹ *Ivi*, p. 17.

specialists in preschool education, published *To Parents on Education. The Education of the Child in the Family up to the First Year of Life*⁶². Many parents were unprepared to cope with childish behaviour such as tantrums and stubbornness, and tended to punish or neglect children during the early years that were critical to the child's growth.

Also in 1949, Nikolaj L. Figurin and M.P. Denisova published *The Stages of Development of Children from Birth to One Year*, in which they studied the development of the child from a reflexological point of view (especially in the system of food reflexes), in order to propose new methods of childcare. The volume was edited by Aksarina in collaboration with Schelovanov, who had been active in the field since the 1920s. Interestingly, the work by Figurin and Denisova was based on Vladimir Bekhterev's school of psychoneurology that, in post-revolutionary Russia, had formed an important basis for the development of paedology:

A general overview of the development of behaviour in the first six months of a child's life from a reflexological point of view was first of all given by V. M. Bekhterev, who showed a gradual complication of a child's combined reflex activity from birth to six months. At the 3rd Congress of Paediatricians [1925], Nikolaj Matveevich Schelovanov (1892–1984) provided a general description of the development of behaviour in the first year of life, first outlining those stages of development, which we have begun to describe in more detail⁶³.

The reference that many made to the conception of reflexes to develop new educational methods «beckoned toward behaviourism and the reduction of mental to neural processes»⁶⁴.

From this perspective, a 1952 article by Z.V. Manujlenko stated that

The assimilation of Ivan P. Pavlov on the first and second signal systems, on their joint activity and a correct understanding of the characteristics of their interaction in a child is important for infant education, for the development of their language and their thinking⁶⁵.

⁶² E.A. Arkin, *Roditeli i o vospitanii. Vospitanie rebenka v sem'e ot goda do zrelosti*, Moskva-Leningrad, Akademiia Pedagogicheskikh Nauk RSFSR, 1948.

⁶³ N.L. Figurin, M.P. Denisova, *Etapy razvitiia povedeniia detei v vozraste ot rozhdeniia do odnogo goda*, Moskva, Medgiz, 1949.

⁶⁴ D. Joravsky, *Russian Psychology. A Critical History*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1989, p. 448-463 (p. 450).

⁶⁵ Z.V. Manujlenko, *Uchenie I.P. Pavlova o dvukh signal'nykh sistemakh i ego znachenie dlia vospitaniia detei doshkol'nogo vozrasta*, in «Doshkol'noe vospitanie», 2/25 (1952), pp. 1-15.

This «second signal system according to Pavlov mediated language and thought», leading to the theory of a metapsychology that mediated between psychology, understood as the study of higher nervous activity, and neurophysiology, with the aim of uniting them in the future. Thanks to this dualism, concepts such as «sensation, thought and feelings» were excluded⁶⁶.

To give another example of this interest in Pavlovian reflexology, an article published in 1959 in the journal “Family and School” (*Semia i shkola*) confirmed this trend. Its author, paediatrician V. Dobreitser, advised parents to repeat the daily nursery life at home, in the family, so that children over four–five months old could get used to the rules of daily life in the nursery, allowing children over four–five months to get used to the rules of routine better, probably to simplify the mechanism of unconditional reflexes⁶⁷.

Since the second half of the 1950s, the debate regarding this conception referred to a problem that had arisen in the daily practice of day nurseries, that of educational continuity between nurseries and kindergartens following the merger of the institutions. This trend, which highlighted the need to develop new research on early childhood pedagogy, also involved new experiments in this field.

Iakovlev, one of the first to criticize this shortcoming, complained that early childhood pedagogy had developed separately from general pedagogy. In his article, he did not mention the repression of paedology, although he recalled that a conference on preschool education in 1925 had also established that early childhood pedagogy had to be part of a single educational system. The realization of this link had to be achieved thanks to similar methods, working conditions and knowledge of those responsible for the children passing from one institution to another⁶⁸. Iakovlev stated that a great deal of research had been conducted following that conference and that, since 1930 at the Institute of Paediatrics of the Academy of Medical Sciences of the Soviet Union (AMN SSSR), directed by Shchelovanov, there was a section devoted to developing a pedagogy for young children. Since the mid-1950s, the collective of scholars of the chair of paediatrics of the Central Institute for the specialization of doctors under the direction of Aksarina and other collaborators in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and Kharkov were conducting research in this field⁶⁹.

Educational continuity required knowledge of the child’s psychological development, as well as theories of family pedagogy. To this end, the

⁶⁶ Joravsky, *Russian Psychology. A Critical History*, cit., p. 451.

⁶⁷ V. Dobreitser, *V iasliakh i v sem’e*, in «*Semia i shkola*», 12 (1959), pp. 7-8.

⁶⁸ Iakovlev, *O edinoi sisteme vospitaniia detei predshkol’nogo i doshkol’nogo vozrasta*, cit., pp. 12-15.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*.

provision of 8 March 1960 of the Council of Ministers and the order of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Russia of 23 February 1960 approved the foundation of the Research Institute on Preschool Education (*Institut doshkol'nogo vospitaniia*). Initially, the institute dealt with preschool education for the Russian Republic, but after 1969 its activity covered all the Soviet republics. The Ministry of Education also contributed to the creation of specialized pedagogical institutes in preschool institutions and faculties aimed at training better qualified scholars in scientific research centres. Valentina Gennad'evna Nechaeva, head of the institute, among the leading specialists in early childhood pedagogy, conducted numerous studies on the education of young children and on their behaviour, which was increasingly seen from the perspective of continuity going into the next phase of the day-nursery–kindergarten.

The relative detente at the political level was a great stimulus. In a very significant article from 1963, Nechaeva stated that the educational conditions in the unified institutions were favourable for the development of three-year-olds⁷⁰. Nechaeva conducted numerous studies observing the children in these unified institutions. These institutions welcomed children aged two–three years, who were the youngest group of preschool age. The formation of this group of the youngest allowed their development to be observed from a broader perspective, considering everything they learnt in the first two years of life. Nechaeva argued that the presence of mixed-age groups was positive. In fact, among the characteristic features of their age were curiosity, the need for socialization in the form of emotional stimulation and under the influence of the need for knowledge, and the desire to ask and know. However, adults engaged in the care of children paid little attention to direct dialogue with them or to activities that stimulated children's mental representations and the development of their knowledge skills.

These gaps in educational work that occurred in the day nurseries are also noted in the work of the unified institutions with three-year-olds. To this end, under the direction of Nechaeva, some collaborators of the Institute of Preschool Education started an investigation of forty-seven of these institutions to study the conditions of socialization between educators and children, and among children of different ages. This research revealed a number of educational deficiencies in younger children:

in most cases, language is poorly developed in children, games are primitive, and the stock of images is poor. To explain the causes of the developmental delay of three-year-olds, we found that there was extremely limited personal

⁷⁰ V.G. Nechaeva, *Obshchenie detei raznogo vozrasta v ob'edinennom doshkol'nom uchrezhdenii*, in «Sovetskaia pedagogika», 9 (1963), pp. 56–62.

contact between the educator and the children, and also artificial isolation by the older children. Very frequently, children of this age are placed with two-year-olds, which to some extent contributes to the mental, moral and language development of three-year-olds, but nevertheless cannot fully meet their increasing mental and moral needs. The screening showed that three-year-old children who are raised in mixed groups of young children lag behind in development significantly. This abruptly affects their language and the character of their playful activity⁷¹.

These problems are explained by the fact that the nurse-educators, busy with the care of the children in these groups, neglected the older children. Adults generally did not address a particular child, but more often the whole group. Therefore, monotonous orders ("sit down at the table", "be composed and keep quiet, or "eat politely") did not develop skills in young children. There were differences in communication. In fact, in groups of small children, communication between peers was often limited to gestures and expressive sounds, but not words.

The inclusion of children under the age of three in mixed-age groups, on the other hand, has presented numerous advantages from an educational point of view. The presence of the older ones, of preschool age, offered the opportunity to turn to the older children who have more developed skills, as they constantly see the games the older children play, note examples of exact pronunciation, hear the difference and freedom of spoken language, and observe habits of behaviour and service⁷².

Analysing the different conditions of socialization and their differing influence on children, Nechaeva held that this influence could give positive educational results only with an educational intervention oriented by the educator. For this, it was important to explain the extent to which the pedagogical conditions of socialization could exert a positive influence and to follow the influence on the moral and language development of children of three years of age, since it is precisely at this age that language is formed and they set up feelings and moral relationships.

To study the stages of development of these skills in relation to the age of children, two other researchers, T.A. Markova and L.A. Pen'evskaia, collaborated in the research to investigate other aspects in depth. Markova, studied the influence of socialization on the moral development of children, while Pen'evskaia investigated the development of language for a year and a half in the kindergarten in the Kiev district of Moscow, with the collabo-

⁷¹ *Ibidem*.

⁷² *Ibidem*.

ration of educators R.F. Ivanova, I.K. Markova, R.G. Episheva, E.M. Klimanova, L.B. Komiagina and the head of the kindergarten M.P. Remizova.

The study examined two groups, as well as a third control group. The first group, made up of twenty-three children aged two–three, was allowed (if there was no quarantine) to socialize with older children during walks, games and distractions, in the organization of some activities and in their little square. The second group had twenty-seven children aged two–six years, with nine children from each age group. The control group consisted of three-year-old children following the usual daily routine.

The socialization of children of different preschool ages had already been addressed in the history of pedagogy and the positive impact of interacting with children of different ages on their education and moral development was observed. For this reason, the older children were included in the second group, in which the children addressed each other affectionately, and learnt to care for younger children. Great significance was also given to qualities such as organization, discipline and strong habits of polite behaviour. This would have made it possible to observe the socialization of children in the process of collective games in daily life and the reciprocal influences reflected in the content of their activity.

These observations and studies brought out the peculiar traits of children's socialization determined by their age-related experiences. The experiment revealed that in the presence of regular visits from older children to the three-year-olds, stable bonds form. These bonds are the basis on which shared work activity and games takes place, in which the younger ones learn things from simple manipulation to more complex play, as well as more active conversation. When an older child took on the task of looking after the younger ones, socialization acquired a pedagogical meaning because they felt responsible: they tried to make it more interesting for the younger ones to participate in games, and wanted to teach and explain things to them. Thanks to this experiment, interactions between the two age groups and their characteristics could be better understood. In interacting with two–three-year-old children, children aged four–five take on the task of helping them, trying to play roles such as the mother, in a series of playful activities. Sometimes, however, they also show their superiority. However, six–seven-year-old children teach the younger ones without showing superiority. The younger ones get along better with them, and the games are longer than those with four-year-olds⁷³.

Pen'kovskaia and Markova highlighted different results. Pen'kovskaia showed that the socialization of small children with older children facilitated the development of language and this led to organizing moments of

⁷³ *Ivi*, p. 58.

shared play, such as a walk. Markova pointed out that the presence of a pedagogical direction in the socialization of adults and children helped to improve the level of moral development of the child.

Frequent contact brings positive activity and emotions. The experiment was based on contact two–three times a week, during walks and afternoon activities⁷⁴. The experiment therefore demonstrated the positive effects of planned meetings, two–three times a week for about 30 minutes to an hour, under the direction of an educator. In fact, socialization stimulates imitation, as the example of adults was adopted by the three-year-olds and mutual friendships were established, influencing the children's characters positively⁷⁵.

These researches, which have yet to be reconstructed from the point of view of their results, have made a great contribution to the study of early childhood development and behaviour and the function of the interaction between groups of children.

In 1970, the Director of the Institute of Preschool Education Alexander Viktorovich Zaporozhets (1905–1981), who was close to the “historical-cultural” school⁷⁶, published new studies on preschool education in which he stated that the preschool phase was important for the formation of human personality, abilities and qualities, on which the children's future school success depended⁷⁷. Under his direction, new trends were developed in the field of developmental psychology studies in preschool education. In 1976, he made a specific reference to the role of psychoanalysis in child developmental psychology.

In 1978 Zaporozhets, in collaboration with Pjotr Iakovlevich Galperin and Sofia Nikolaeva Karpova, published a study collection on educational and creative activities, characterized by stimulating activities in nurseries and kindergartens, revealing a great improvement in the quality of childhood educational services. The educational activities were specific to the age group and distinguished for example, the group of children under the age of two from the others. For each age group, there were different activities that were generally very stimulating for the child's growth. Drawing

⁷⁴ *Ivi*, pp. 59–60.

⁷⁵ *Ivi*, p. 62.

⁷⁶ Angelini, *La psicoanalisi in Russia. Dai precursori agli anni trenta*, cit., pp. 116–117.

⁷⁷ A.V. Zaporozhets, *Aktual'nyye pedagogicheskie problemy doshkol'nogo vospitaniia. Materialy k dokladu na Vsesoiuznykh pedagogicheskikh chteniiakh 1970 goda*, Leningrad-Moskva, Znanie, 1970, p. 6.

was among the most developed activities⁷⁸. Child developmental psychology was formulated in a new way:

The object of child psychology is the study of the conditions and causes driving the ontogenesis of the human psyche, the development of individual mental processes (cognitive, volitional, emotional), as well as the different childhood activities (games, work, learning), the formation of personality qualities, the psychological characteristics of the age and individual children⁷⁹.

This definition promised the dissemination of a plurality of educational methods. Knowledge of child psychology offered the basis for developing new, more age-appropriate educational methods that respect their individuality. The Soviet crèches, considered from the educational perspective of preschool education, were characterized by progressive changes as a function of a pedagogical project that concerned all the years of life that preceded school. The development of the psychological sciences, thanks to the legacy of the “historical-cultural” school, accompanied this important transformation of nurseries into pedagogical institutions.

Conclusions

The reconstruction of the history of childcare services after the Second World War and in particular during the 1945–1978 period, which corresponds to the so-called “thirty glorious years” (1945–1975), reveals some important phases of change both at the institutional level and in educational methods. After the war ended, the Soviet government immediately tried to restore and improve preschool institutions, revealing some major trends. At the institutional level, alongside the problems of disorganization, structural deficiencies, and lack of buildings and adequate sanitary conditions, there was also the lack of places in day nurseries, and generally for children up to 1 years old.

In relation to these problems, on the one hand, the trend emerged of combining day nurseries and kindergartens, with a more accentuated role of the Ministry of Education. This meant that, compared to the research that claimed a large number of preschool institutions guaranteed a place

⁷⁸ P.Ia. Gal’perin, A.V. Zaporozhets, S.N. Karpova, *Aktual’nye problemy vozrastnoi psikhologii. Materialy k kursu leksii*, Moskva, Izdatel’stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1978.

⁷⁹ *Ivi*, p. 5.

for children so as to encourage women to join the workforce⁸⁰, the reality was different. This confirms what the historian Donald Filtzer says about the fact that World War II created only a modest increase in the number of Soviet women working:

During the Khrushchev period, the problem [...] was how to overcome the economic incentives that many women had to remain within the domestic economy, where their labour was more advantageous to the family budget than work in industry or services. Moreover, once recruited, there was no question of women being made redundant, although they could be displaced from certain mechanized jobs if management felt compelled to offer this work to men⁸¹.

This conciliatory function – the conciliation between women working and their maternal role – of the day nurseries was mainly realized later, as demonstrated by the research of Anatoli Rakhkochkine:

In the 1950s and 1960s, the expansion of all-day education in the Soviet Union was motivated above all by both economic and ideological motives. As was the case in other communist countries, the Soviet state faced a labor shortage that compelled it to bring more married women, in particular mothers, into the workforce. To do this, the government needed to expand all-day childcare and education. Because of a dramatically declining birth rate, in the 1970s and 1980s the extension of all-day education became an important part of a broader pronatalist family policy that sought to increase the fertility rate⁸².

⁸⁰ «For example, in 1954 the proportion of women workers in machine-building was 44 percent and in electrical engineering it was 47 per cent. Women made up 64 per cent of machine operators, 70 per cent of turret-lathe operators, and 42 percent of locomotive and motor drivers», see A. Schuster, *Women's Role in the Soviet Union. Ideology and reality*, in «The Russian Review», 30/3 (1971), p. 263.

⁸¹ D. Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and De-Stalinization: The Consolidation of the Modern System of Soviet Production Relations 1953–1964*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 205.

⁸² A. Rakhkochkine, *Beyond Ideology: The Time Policy of Russian School Education since 1945*, in K. Hagemann, K.H. Jarausch, C. Allemann-Ghionda (eds.), *Children, Families, and States. Time Policies of Childcare, Preschool, and Primary Education in Europe*, New York Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2011, pp. 323-343 (see pp. 323-324).

However, in order to describe these further changes, it will also be necessary to analyse the archival documents of the Ministry of Education to verify how this conciliatory function was implemented in the 1980s⁸³.

From the point of view of the renewal of contents and pedagogical concepts, one can note the emergence of two main trends in the psychology of young children, which reveal a different continuity with past research. The first is reflexology, which interpreted psychic phenomena and education in a more mechanical way. The second trend in research is related to language development inspired by the “historical-cultural” school of Lev S. Vygotsky, who appreciated Jean Piaget’s conception of the development of the child⁸⁴. The continuity with these studies was visible in the attention to the socialization of the child and the development of language that was the subject of research from the early 1960s to the revival of psycho-pedagogical studies related to preschool-age children. Vygotsky’s works, the best known of which is *Thought and Language* (1934), left a profound trace, and it has been re-published since the mid-1980s⁸⁵.

Since the 1960s, thanks to the studies conducted by the specialists at the Institute of Preschool Education, the renewal of educational activities within the nurseries began, with experiments that studied the behaviour of children organized into groups of various ages. However, some concepts, such as psychoanalysis, that could have contributed to the renewal of educational methods and activities within the nursery schools have only recently been accepted. The rehabilitation of paedology in the 1980s⁸⁶, at a time when daycare methods were also being renewed, and its transformation into a pedagogical institution at an international level, fuelled great interest in previously discredited theories. The work of the American psychoanalyst John Bowlby (1907–1990), who studied attachment, that is, the bond with the mother in the first months of life, when the child is first placed in day nurseries, was only translated into Russian in 2003⁸⁷. The circulation of some

⁸³ E. Iarskaia-Smirnova, P. Romanov, *Multiplicity and Discontinuity in the Soviet Welfare State*, in S. Hering (ed.), *Social Care Under Socialism (1945–1989). Ambitions, Ambiguities, and Mismanagement*, Opladen & Farmington Hills, MI, Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2009, pp. 213–225.

⁸⁴ D. Joravsky, *Russian Psychology. A Critical History*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1989, p. 455.

⁸⁵ *Ivi*, pp. 453–454.

⁸⁶ A. Byford, *Science of the Child in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Russia*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020, pp. 255–261.

⁸⁷ J. Bowlby, *Attachment*, London, The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, 1969 (trans. into Russian *Priviazannost’*. Per. N.G. Grigor’evna and V.G. Burmenskaia, red. Vst. Stat’ia V.G. Burmenskaia, Moskva, Gardariki, 2003).

theories underlying an educational renewal of psychoanalytic inspiration in Russia is even more recent. Even the work of the psychoanalyst René Spitz (1887–1974), published in France in 1958 and immediately translated into Italian, was only translated into Russian in 2006⁸⁸.

Although the history of the development of nurseries has typical characteristics of the Soviet system, it can be observed that the transformation of nurseries into educational institutions and the problem of educational continuity, discussed since the 1960s, reveals a process of transformation of day nurseries into pedagogical institutions that welcome children under the age of 7.

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⁸⁸ R.S. Spitz, *The First Year of Life: A Psychoanalytic Study of Normal and Deviant Development of Object Relations*, New York, International Universities Press, 1965 (transl. into English *Pervyj god zizhni rebenka. Psichooanaliticheskoe issledovanie normal'nogo i otkloniaiushego razvitiia ob'ektnykh otnoshenii*. Per. s angl. L.B. Summ. Pod red. A.M. Bokovikova, Moskva, Akademicheskii proekt, 2006).

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Finito di stampare per Clueb
da Editografica – Rastignano (Bo)
nel mese di dicembre 2022

