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## **EDUCATIONAL METHODS OF A. MAKARENKO AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN MODERN EDUCATION**

Anton S. Makarenko (1888-1939) was an educator and visionary pedagogue who rose above social upheavals and conditions of his time and set up a commendable model for teachers to come, by transforming the lives and personality of homeless, delinquent and drifting juveniles. Having started as a primary school teacher at the age of seventeen, his views on education began to form at the outset of his career. Those years coincided with the first Russian revolution. In his memoirs, Makarenko wrote: "The understanding of history came to us through the medium of Bolshevik education and revolutionary events. ... " As for his pedagogical views and methods, he developed them in the course of his years at the Gorky colony and the Dzerzhinsky commune. That was how commenced the life of a pedagogical genius and a transformational social worker. Educational values of Makarenko is best understood through his life, close observation of his teaching at school, a thorough analysis of his methods and novelties in educating the waifs and strays, and theoretical study of his writings.

Anton learned to read at the age of five. He was an avid reader. When he was twelve he was sent to municipal school where he excelled in all subjects and came top of his class. At school Anton sang in the school choir, took interest in drawing and playing violin. After graduation from municipal school, he attended a one-year teachers' course at the same school. In 1905 his career as a primary school teacher began at the railway school in Kriukov. Since the railway school was financed by the Department of Railways, it had better facilities and equipment. Besides school subjects, manual labor was taught to pupils. Besides being an excellent teacher, Makarenko organized extra-curricular activities for pupils. He organized a Parents' committee, and the meetings were actively attended by parents and teachers. In 1914, Makarenko got admission to Poltava Teachers' institute. At institute he stood out with his erudition and on hand experience of nine-year teaching. His knowledge on various topics and fluency of speech earned him respect among his peers and teachers. He graduated the Institute with gold medal. While at institute, Makarenko proved himself as an outstanding and a promising teacher in the making. His life testifies him as a proficient teacher, a prolific writer, a social-influencer and a groundbreaking pedagogue.

His groundbreaking methods in education have not lost their rationale of applicability in modern education system. During his years at the Gorky colony and the Dzerzhinsky commune he practically developed and applied his methods and demonstrated their effectiveness. In his own words he was "engaged in an experiment which will be of tremendous importance." His pedagogical principles were, mainly, collective education, student self-government, discipline, role of labor in education, and the role of educator in the collective.

Pedagogical values of Makarenko were centered on moral upbringing and character education. He focused more on development of personality and moral virtues than scholastic achievements. This goal, he believed, could be achieved in an organized life of a collective. For Makarenko, educating colonists opened a path to creative initiatives, and he built a collective of "organized community of individuals pursuing a clear purpose and governed by its collective

organs.” He stated, “Wherever there is an organization of the collective there are organs of the collective, and an organization of the collective's representatives empowered by it. The relationship between comrades is not based on friendship or love or neighborliness but on responsible and mutual dependence. Comrades are not connected by friendship but by the joint responsibility for work, by their common participation in the work of the collective.” At Gorky colony the basic collective was formed by organizing colonists into work detachments headed by a commander. The commanders were responsible for their detachments; they had to supervise, organize the works, and were responsible for discipline of their detachment. The post of commander was rotational. Eventually a meeting of commanders was set up and was named "council of commanders" becoming executive body of the colony. This organizational novelty proved effective and ensured active participation of the entire colony. Makarenko established self-governing collective responsible for their educational, social, economic and recreational life. For previous homeless juveniles this meant a new life, a new perspective. For Makarenko it was realization of his idea of collective education. Makarenko opined that a primary collective was pedagogically most effective if it resembled a family. Some of the ideals that illustrate collective education:

1. The role of collective in forming moral character. By building a sense of belonging, members put aside their egoism and self-interest and devote themselves to the common good. Members develop social habits, friendship, co-operation and social awareness.
2. The role of collective in forming standards of behavior and social modes of conduct.
3. The role of collective in developing a sense of duty and responsibility.
4. The role of collective in developing self-discipline.

Makarenko devised two measures; participation of members in the life of the collective and degree of identification of a member with the aims and interests of the collective, to evaluate the educational success of a collective.

Makarenko, in defiance of government endorsed educational policy of that time, advocated discipline as an important instrument in education and upbringing. He was demanding, both on teachers and his charges. He advocated his idea of punishment and discipline to develop moral character and ethical conduct. He saw demand as an instrument to awaken the children's potential and gradual increase of demand would push the child to develop their true capabilities. As for the discipline, Makarenko thought it had beauty and dignity. For him, discipline could be rendered pleasant and exciting. Although he used discipline as an instrument in educating his charges at the Gorky colony and the Dzerzhinsky commune, he regarded discipline to be an outcome of education. An important novelty in Makarenko's demand and discipline was its incorporation with respect. In his numerous lectures he stated, “My fundamental principle has always been: the utmost possible demands on a person, put at the same time the utmost possible respect for him. One cannot demand great things of someone whom one does not respect.” Makarenko balanced unwavering demand on learners with respecting their dignity.

As we mentioned, his groundbreaking methods in education began with “experiment” at the Gorky colony. The Gorky colony and the Dzerzhinsky commune were both labor colonies. Homeless juveniles lived, worked and attended school at these colonies. Makarenko divided the school day into productive labor work and formal instruction. The government view at that time required coordination of school and production. But Makarenko opposed this idea, instead focused on labor as a part of upbringing. He believed labor had character-forming value. His experience at the Gorky colony helped him formulate his principle on the role of education. He

concluded labor had educational role only when it resulted in a labor product of value to society. At the Dzerzhinsky commune he firmly came to conclusion that “labor which does not aim to produce value is not a positive element in upbringing.” A new society envisioned by the Soviet system, Makarenko believed could be achieved by students participating in a highly developed production system and completing a ten-year school.

As an outstanding pedagogue, Makarenko transformed the lives of about three thousand juveniles. His legacy was an unthinkable achievement of moral upbringing and character formation in his charges. Makarenko had distinct views for ‘teacher’ and ‘educator.’ For Makarenko, a teacher had the role of teaching a class while an educator had the role of an upbringer. For him upbringing and classroom instruction were independent branches of pedagogy. He outlined his views in his manual “Methods of organizing the educational process” (1935). An educator’s role, he advocated, should extend beyond classroom instruction, to be precise, it should embrace every detail of his life. An educator should counsel and guide his student but never should he regard the student as an object of study. At the colony, an educator’s success was measured by the psychological climate of the detachment, production performance and the degree of their mutual relationship.

Makarenko promoted the idea of educator being a part of the learners’ collective, and secondly, collective of educators inspired by same ideas. For successful educational process a collective of educators was key factor. He preferred “five weak educators who are united in a collective and inspired by the same ideas... than to have ten good educators who each work on their own.” He suggested educator’s collective comprise of young and old, and a balance of men and women. While he gave clear outlines for educators’ collective, he paid much attention to individual training of an educator, as well. It included character training, training in proper conduct, and priming in the specific capabilities. Namely these specific capabilities were voice training, the art of movement and the art of giving someone a gaze. He called them pedagogical mastery. He stressed the importance of pedagogical mastery for effective teaching. In one of his lectures Makarenko noted “Teachers, in addition to their regular training courses, need to receive training in pedagogical mastery.” This mastery, he emphasized, was an art that could be developed by specialized training.

Surely, Makarenko’s educational ideas and achievements drew the attention of scholars in the East and the West, outside the Soviet Union. But, how applicable and relevant are his theories in today’s education system? As we analyzed his life, his teaching, methods and novelties he developed and employed at the Gorky colony and the Dzerzhinsky commune and his views on educators, the following elements are worth of consideration.

*Collaborative learning.* Collective education makes up the core of Makarenko’s pedagogical construction. The roles and models of collective education are thoroughly illustrated in the examples of the Gorky colony and the Dzerzhinsky commune. This concept of collective education resonates with modern pedagogical approaches that prioritize collaborative learning environments, group projects and peer-to-peer interaction.

*Holistic education.* Makarenko preferred to moral upbringing and character formation over school instruction. He regarded school as a part of the process of upbringing. For him upbringing and classroom instruction were two independent branches of pedagogy. Makarenko asserted educator’s role should extend beyond classroom instruction, to be precise; it should embrace every detail of his life. Addressing diverse needs of students aligns with contemporary theories of holistic education which advocates addressing cognitive, social, emotional, and physical aspects of learning.

*Character development.* As a pedagogue, Makarenko firmly believed in inherent goodness and boundless potential for moral growth of humans. He viewed deviant personal characteristics as an outcome of adverse environmental conditions that could be overcome once the individual was returned to a healthy and stable life situation. In his own words, creating a new man becomes his educational aim. In his book *Pedagogical Poem*, he describes this responsibility laid upon him by the Chief of the Gubernia Department of Public Education by these words: “The main thing isn't just a colony for juvenile delinquents, but you know...social re-education. We've got to create the new man, you know--our sort of man.” As we see in the examples of his charges at the Gorky colony and the Dzerzhinsky commune transformed into ‘new men and women,’ Makarenko achieved an overall development of new characters in them. His emphasis on discipline, responsibility, and character development is reflected in modern character education initiatives that aim to foster qualities like resilience, empathy, and integrity alongside the academic achievement.

*Experiential learning.* Makarenko’s methods of skills training in production and hands-on learning experiences are consistent with modern pedagogical trends favoring experiential learning, project-based learning and real-world application of knowledge.

*Community building.* Collective education stands out as the foremost concept among Makarenko’s pedagogical principles. In his book *Pedagogical Poem*, wherein he introduced his pedagogical theories in a work of literature, he tells us of his life in the Gorky colony and how he built pupils collective out of misguided and backward juveniles. His vision of creating a supportive community environment in schools is selectively applicable in contemporary efforts to build inclusive school cultures, promote positive relationships among students and teachers, and engage families and communities in the educational process.

It is obviously understandable that his methods and principles cannot be adopted in its entirety and original forms in today’s ever growing social and educational environment. But surely some aspects of Makarenko’s educational views with adaptation can be fitted in modern contexts and diverse educational settings. His overarching principles of collaboration, holistic development, character education, experiential learning and community building continue to inspire educators worldwide.

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