

The Gifts and ‘Contributions’: Friedrich Froebel and Russian Education (1850-1929)

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This article examines the contribution of the Russian Froebelian movement to educational theory and practice in Russia, in the context of the cultural transformation there from the second half of the nineteenth to the beginning of twentieth century. The Froebel movement had a strong influence not only on the formation of Russian early years educational practice but also child psychology. The analysis explores mainly, but not exclusively, the educational ideas of two followers of Froebel, Elizaveta Vodovosova (1844-1923), educator and writer, and Luiza Schleger (1862-1942), founder of the first public kindergarten in Moscow. Their lives and educational beliefs highlight the development of two different interpretations of Froebelian educational theory in two particular periods of Russian cultural development. In this article we argue that the specific accommodation of Froebelian pedagogy in pre-revolutionary Russia created the foundation for the presence of Froebelian ideas in the curriculum of Soviet Early Childhood Education.

Introduction

Although it is well recognised that Froebel’s method was the most popular system for pre-school education in Russia ¹ contemporary Russian research has been predominantly concerned with the history of the Froebelian movement in Russia but not on the contribution of Froebelian pedagogy to Russian pre-school education. Nor has much research been done on the influence of Froebelian ideas, during the Tsarist era, and its impact on the formation of the field of early years studies in Russia. In addition, for many years during the socialist period, “Froebelianism”, or “neo-Froebelianism” were denounced as examples of “petty-bourgeois pedagogy” ² Froebel’s system was criticised, especially during Stalin’s Era but it was recognised again after 1956, partly due to the esteem in which it was held within the pedagogy of the German Democratic Republic (GDR).³ But the role of Froebelian pedagogy in shaping Russian pre-school education was still unacknowledged. This article is an attempt to identify

the contribution of Froebelian pedagogy in mediating the emerging theories and practices of early years education in Russia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The impact of Froebelian pedagogy in Russia is discussed in the light of the changing dominant social and political discourses in Russia. In particular, it examines the socio-historical context of the reception of Froebelian pedagogy in Russia and how the reception of Froebelian pedagogy has changed dramatically over time. It also examines how the presence of the Froebelian system in Russia mediated the development of a particular concept of childhood and consequently theory for Russian pre-school education. Taking account of the fact that Russian histories of pre-school education have always been part of an intense ideological battleground, emphasis is placed here on the role of Froebelian pedagogy in the construction and maintenance of dominant ideas about education of young children in Russia and restoring to it its rightful place in history.

Froebel and the modernisation of Russian education in the 19th century

The period when Froebel's philosophy was introduced to Russia, is widely considered to be an era of great reforms in the country.⁴ During the early part of Tsar Alexander II's reign (1855-81), liberal reforms were enacted in Russia. It was a period of dramatic change in state educational policy. Although Alexander II is known for his repressive policy towards the *narodniki*, the populist, adherents of an agrarian socialist movement active from the 1860s, many Russian intellectuals recognised Alexander's personal role in the promotion of the reforms, which began with the emancipation of the serfs. Some intellectuals compared their significance with those of Peter the Great's in the eighteenth century. It was Alexander II who began the reforms in education as well.

His education reforms created a new unified school system in Russia in 1864 and aimed to overcome the massive illiteracy that weighed down the former serfs. Elementary schools were opened around the country by the *zemstvos*, the new local councils which were given powers to provide roads, medical services and schools. The number of secondary schools also increased, their quality was improved and for the first time in Russia women were allowed to attend secondary schools and specially designed university courses for women⁵. The reforms opened access to higher and secondary education to large numbers of students⁶ who came from different social and economic backgrounds. This provided the conditions for the emergence of a new specifically Russian social layer, the intelligentsia.⁷ Another significant transformation in

the area of education occurred in the academic field. In order to develop an environment for achieving high quality research and teaching in Russian Universities, the state gave them autonomy. This act, known as The University Statute of 1863, changed the identity of the Russian Universities.⁸ Emphasis was laid on the adoption and implementation of the best of West European theories. Some one hundred academics, professors, and future heads of departments in Russian Universities, were sent to Western Europe under the supervision of N.I Pirogov during 1861-1866.⁹ As Byford has observed, the reforms created the conditions, 'necessary for the emergence of a relatively autonomous pedagogical field' which, in turn, was linked to the formation of a profession.¹⁰

Russian society embraced the new changes and public discussion about the value of education for social and economic improvement took place in Russia. For many intellectuals it was a time of great hope and great expectations. One of the most famous contemporary Russian writers, Saltikov-Shedrin expressed the social optimism of the reformers by saying, 'The golden century is not behind us, it is ahead'.¹¹ The word 'education' could even be heard in the nobles' salons, where discussions about education replaced dancing and music.¹² These tremendous changes in Russian educational policy and in public discourse in the second half of nineteenth century provided the conditions for the emergence of ideas about the pre-school education of children. Froebel's method, as one of the modern educational systems for the education of young children, was accepted in Russia during this period and Froebel was considered as one of the most modern educators in Europe.¹³

One of the first to welcome Froebel's method to Russia was the aristocrat, the Grand Duchess, Velikaya Kniaginia Elena Pavlovna (1806-1873).¹⁴ A German born princess, she was a daughter of Frederick of Württemberg who married the brother of the Tsar Nicholas I. She was among the advocates of the emancipation of the serfs and of the liberal reforms. But her place in Russian history was secured by her contribution to the cultural transformation of 19th century Russia. She was greatly influential on upper class Russian society. The Grand Duchess Elena's salons were a place for meetings of prominent Russian intellectuals and senior political figures. The idea of founding a school for music education in Russia (Russian Musical Academy) was born in the Grand Duchess Elena's salon and she was the patron of the French composer, Hector Berlioz (1803-1869). Open to innovations that could lead to social improvement, at the request of the Baroness Bertha von Marenholtz Buelow (1810-1893), who played a pivotal role in the international spread of the kindergarten, she sent three young Russian women to Berlin to be trained in Froebel's method in 1863.¹⁵ The Baroness also

introduced Froebel's method to the Grand Duchess Elena, and as a result she was inspired to establish pre-school education in Russia.

Nevertheless, interest in Froebel's system had emerged in Russia before the reforming efforts of the Grand Duchess. Information about Froebel's system first came to Russia from the descriptions of the work observed in the kindergartens sent from Western Europe by Russian academics and educators who had visited Western Europe in the 1860s. One of them was Vasilii Ivanovich Vodovosov (1825-1886). He was a Russian educator who embodied the opposing ideas of the Westernisers and the Slavophiles¹⁶ for although he was a passionate supporter of developing a unique Russian national pedagogy, thought appropriate to the Russian people, he was also interested in the adoption of the most advanced Western European approaches to pedagogical questions. He visited some kindergartens in Germany in 1857 and described his considerations in articles, which were published in the Russian *Journal of the Ministry of Public Education*. During his further visits in 1862 and in 1872 in Europe he met prominent educators and conducted a systematic survey of the most modern system and approaches. He recognized the leading role Froebel and other German educators, played in developing modern European pedagogy, new theoretical paradigms and new methods, including, 'the invention of the kindergarten.'¹⁷ In his article, *The significance of German Education*.¹⁸ Vodovosov recommended that German methods be considered exclusively in the context of existing Russian educational reality since German approaches could be 'too advanced for Russian school children.'¹⁹

Educators working for the Russian Ministry of Education also visited Froebelian kindergartens. They were given the task of studying modern approaches in education in Western Europe and to report on which system they considered best for implementation in Russia. In some ways, they performed the role that Henry Barnard did for the United States in the same period.²⁰ Their reports contain evaluations of the Western European, 'New Pedagogy', and Froebel's method in particular. They were published in the *Journal of Moscow Regional Education*. One of those whose reports gave information about Froebel's pedagogy was Konstantin Dmitrievich Ushinsky (1824-1870). He has been described as the 'patriarch' of Russian education.²¹ Ushinsky visited Froebelian kindergartens in Western Europe and he wrote of his experiences in *The Report of the Visit Abroad*, which was published in 1867. He wrote of Froebel that,

as every inventor he is too enthusiastic. He created games that are not very appropriate for children ...to create a child's game is, probably, one of the most difficult tasks for an

adult man. Instead, Froebel could have adopted the games invented many centuries ago and that are played today by a Russian boy, a little Italian, and a young Indian.²²

Although critical of Froebel's games, Ushinsky recognised his worth in drawing attention to the value of childhood and to the place of the play in child's life. He recommended Froebelian games and system of exercises, but he felt they must first be simplified before being implemented in practices in orphanages and primary schools in Russia. Froebelian teachers impressed him, especially Ms. Mirbah a teacher he met in Switzerland, whom he described as an educator, who could, instinctively understand the nature of the child. Reflecting a view held by many supporters of the kindergarten,²³ Ushinsky concluded that Froebel's system was a success for the reason that Froebelian teachers were talented, highly qualified women.

As in other countries, the kindergarten was seen as suitable for children in orphanages. An educator and writer, Mikhail Borisovich Chistiakov (1809-1885), undertook an attempt to implement Froebel's practice to orphanages in Russia. The Ministry of Education also sent him to Western Europe in 1866. His task was to explore the organization of the kindergartens by Froebel's method.²⁴ His observations were published in the *Journal of the Ministry of Public Education*. One of his three articles was entitled *Froebel. Kindergarten Abroad*.²⁵

While the figures discussed so far were supportive of the kindergarten, albeit with reservations, Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy (1828-1910) provided a completely negative description of Froebel's methods. He visited several countries in Western Europe (France, Switzerland, Italy, Belgium, England, and Germany) between 1860 and 1861 in order to learn about new methods in education. When he visited Weimar on April 17, 1861, as a guest of the ambassador, Apollonius von Maltitz, he visited Minna Schellhorn's Kindergarten there. Minna Schellhorn (1829-1910), had been trained by Froebel and later she became the Directress of the Female Kindergarten Teacher's Seminar in Weimar. 'She answered Tolstoy's question about Froebel's Institute, explained Froebel's didactic games, had movement exercises performed and gave information freely'. Reportedly, Tolstoy was greatly impressed by what he saw.²⁶

However, his general impression of the Froebelian 'garden for children' was less favourable. When young, Tolstoy had read Rousseau which may have accounted for his conclusion that Froebel's method was, 'the most disgusting child of the new pedagogy.'²⁷ Tolstoy's negative impressions of Froebel's system and about European education as a whole emerged not only from his observations but also from his discussions with many famous European educators who included Froebel's nephew, Julius Froebel (1805-1893)²⁸. Believing that the most

important characteristics, of preschool children are their innocence joy and their endless drive for love and intending to establish a school at Yasnya Polyana, his estate, that he termed, a place for freedom,²⁹ he critically portrayed the children that he observed as ‘four year old children with trembling and strange voices singing hymns to God’.³⁰

Despite the criticisms and misunderstandings, that surrounded Froebel’s system at the beginning of the 1860s, interest in the kindergarten increased all over Russia. There were two main approaches to the adoption of Froebel’s ideas about the education of young children. Firstly, a close adherence to the Froebelian model of kindergarten and secondly, an approach that sought to implement components of Froebel’s system selectively and adapt them to Russian conditions. Adelaida Simonovich (1840-1933) an educator-researcher adopted the latter strategy. With her husband, Jacob, she opened a private kindergarten in Saint Petersburg in 1866, which lasted for more than a year.³¹ Although she was a passionate advocate of the kindergarten pedagogy she developed an approach based on Froebel’s method but she did not implement the method directly in her kindergarten. Significantly, she rejected the mystical and religious aspects in Froebel’s method and emphasised the introduction of children to the world of nature.³² Children in her kindergarten were given large natural materials for building and were encouraged to make observations of natural objects and to conduct experiments in science. She believed that young children were interested in working with materials and that kindergartens should provide children with a wide range of materials for play and creative activities. Simonovich began a discussion about these issues in early years education, in the Journal, *Detsky Sad* (Kindergarten) which she founded in 1866 and of which she was also editor. *Detsky Sad* was the first Russian journal of pre-school education in which Froebelian methods were discussed continuously.

During her practical work with children, she made systematic observations and published a book, in 1873, entitled *Practical Notes about Individual and Public Education of Little Children*, where she described her findings, reflections and recommendations. According to Ludmila Obuhova,³³ Adelaida Simonovich’s systematic observations, especially her observations on children’s speech, were one of the first ever published in the field of child developmental psychology.

Another leading Russian educator who interpreted Froebel’s pedagogy was Elizaveta Nikolaevna Vodovosova. She was a reforming intellectual who believed in education as a means of building up modern, progressive Russian society. She is regarded as a highly significant figure in Russian pre-school education and as a writer and publisher.³⁴

A graduate from the Smolny Institute, a prestigious school for girls of aristocratic families, her teacher there was V. I. Vodovosov, whom she later married. K. D. Ushinsky, whose ideas about nationally specific education she embraced, inspected the Smolny Institute. A radical, Vodovosova was involved closely in the debates about the need for social change. In her writing she contributed to the emergence of feminist discourse in Russia. Under the influence of the thinking of the socialist writer, Nicholai Chernishevsky (1828-1889), Vodovosova theorised women's contribution to the society,³⁵ which she articulated in her first work *Chto jenshene meshaet byt samostoiatel'noy*, well known as 'the voice of Russian women.'³⁶

Vodovosova gained a qualification in education during her study at Smolny Institute where K.D. Ushinsky organised a two-year course, but her practical work began in the 1860s when she, jointly with her husband, worked at a Sunday school founded by him. Additionally, she gave lessons to poor young women at her own home.³⁷ She received her first impressions about Froebel's system from the letters her husband sent to her from Germany in 1857. However, in 1864, she visited kindergartens and schools in Western Europe with the intention to explore a range of educational approaches, including Froebel's system. She considered Froebel's philosophy and practice in her book, which appeared in 1871 *Children's Mental and Moral Education from the First Emerging of Consciousness to the School Age*. This book, which she continually revised until her death in 1927, was one of the first theoretical works in the area of child development in Russia. Following the ideas of her husband, V. Vodovosov and her teacher K. D. Ushinsky about Russian national education, she directed her work to the creation of recommendations about pre-school education tailored for Russian children. It should be pointed out that her reading of Froebel was an attempt to integrate Froebel's method into the Russian environment. Entirely accepting Froebel's educational materials, which she recognised as very creative, she expressed her doubts about the suitability for Russian culture of the German mysticism which, in her opinion, existed in Froebel's songs and moral stories. Instead, she introduced a collection of Russian stories, songs and games for children based on Russian folklore. Vodovosova's work was explored in some Russian Froebelian kindergartens. Her understanding of Froebel gave further inspiration to many educators to develop a nationally specific Russian interpretation of Froebel.

Froebel Societies

The first Froebel society was founded in Saint Petersburg in 1871 by two teachers, trained in Gote, Germany, N.K. Zadler and E. A. Verter.³⁸ The society organised teacher training courses and opened a kindergarten in 1873. The Saint Petersburg Froebel society did pioneering work

disseminating Froebel's ideas widely in Russia. Lecturers at the Froebel institute were many prominent figures of the Russian pedagogy. Peotr Feodorovich. Kapterev (1849-1922) and Yosif Ivanovich Paulson (1825-1898)³⁹ were among the founders of the movement. Semion Franck (1877—1950), the famous Russian religious philosopher, lectured there as well.⁴⁰

The society commenced discussions about Froebel's method, published literature and trained teachers and nannies. Shortly after the society was founded, many private kindergartens were opened in major cities within the Russian empire.⁴¹ Among them was the Froebel kindergarten in Tula, opened in 1872 by Vikentii Ignatievich Semidovich, a doctor, and his wife Elisaveta Pavlovna, who was trained at the newly established Froebel course in Saint -Petersburg in 1871.⁴² Elisaveta Pavlovna organised the kindergarten, which was closely modelled on Froebel's system, in her home for children aged three to seven. Semidovich equipped the kindergarten with materials with the help of her husband who made a huge model landscape, which consisted of woods, valleys, rivers, seas and islands. The activities were organised in the park of the family estate during the summer. All the children were relatives and friends of Semidovich. The kindergarten had been opened for only three years and it was closed in 1875 due to shortage of money as was frequently the fate of private kindergartens in other countries at the time.⁴³

But not only trained Froebelian teachers had founded kindergartens during this period. For instance, the first kindergarten in Tomsk was opened in 1875 by a man named M. I. Makushin, who had been educated in Saint Petersburg to become a priest.⁴⁴ He was inspired to organize a kindergarten by a book about Froebel's system produced by the Saint Petersburg Froebel society.

The Froebel society was concerned not only about education of middle class children. With the help of philanthropic industrialists, two public factory kindergartens were founded in Saint Petersburg for working class children. The first of these kindergartens was opened in 1894 along with a summer playground for poor children. A second public factory kindergarten was established in 1897, which was used during a summer as an organised playground for children aged 3-14.⁴⁵

The acceptance of the idea of pre-school education of young children was widespread in the 1860s⁴⁶ and public support for the kindergarten movement grew up rapidly within the Empire. The repression following the assassination of Tzar Alexander II in 1881 changed the public attitude to the enlightenment as a philosophy of social improvement, and consequently to the

highly progressive notion, for Russian society, of educating young children outside of the family. This wasn't regarded as valuable for upper and middle class children, and it was considered inappropriate for working class children also. As a result, according to Adelaida Simonovich,⁴⁷ there were only some 1,000 children enrolled at kindergartens in Russia in 1896. The repression also scapegoated Jews and the government didn't allow Jewish students to attend Froebelian teacher training courses.

The expansion of Froebel based preschool education in the period of industrial growth in Russia

During the economic reforms under the Russian Duma Monarchy which followed the revolution of 1905, and which by 1914 had placed Russia among the first five leading industrial nations, Froebelian pedagogy spread rapidly. Kindergartens and teacher institutes mainly supported by philanthropic groups were extended but the number of the kindergartens in Russia was still relatively low. There were only 150 kindergartens in Russia by 1914 and some 280 kindergartens by October 1917.⁴⁸ Together with industrialisation came the growth of public interest in pre-school education, in general and, and in Froebel's method, in particular. The Froebel kindergarten was the most well-known system for pre-school education and it dominated most pre-school settings in Russia.⁴⁹ Froebel societies in Saint Petersburg, Odessa, Tomsk, and Kiev provided teacher training courses. Froebelian-trained teachers became pre-school teachers and primary teachers but most frequently they were employed by middle and upper class families as nannies. These had been provided with training at the Froebel institute since 1885. The trained nannies were called "froebelichki" in Russia and the Ukraine, and this word is still in use in those countries now.

The most influential group of Froebelians was situated in Saint Petersburg, the industrial centre of Russia. But the second major Froebelian centre in Russia, emerged in Kiev, where a Froebel society was founded in 1908.⁵⁰ The society had great influence on the education in the Ukraine as a whole. It published a range of books on pre-school education, including *Summer playground*, (1914), *Kindergartens in Paris*, (1914) and others, in order to promote the kindergarten system among the public. The society also established the Kiev Women's Educational Institute on Big Jitomirskiy Street. The institute was a major educational institution in Ukraine for the training of pre-school teachers. The courses offered a three-year paid kindergarten teacher-training program, which became the biggest teacher training

institution in the Ukraine. Its popularity grew rapidly. 217 teachers were trained there in 1910/11 and the number of the teachers who graduated increased to 338 in 1913/14.⁵¹ The students came from different social-economic backgrounds, but mostly were from families of the urban middle class (teachers, medical doctors, journalists, and writers, priests and merchants). Some of them attended the courses because they wanted to pursue careers as teachers in private or public schools, and some of them prepared themselves to be nannies and to work in upper-class and middle class family homes. Among the students that attended the course was Vera Schmidt, a prominent figure in Russian psychoanalysis, the head of the psychoanalytic kindergarten in Moscow and one of the members of the Pre-school Department of the Commissariat of the Enlightenment (Narkompros) in Lenin's government.⁵²

The curriculum of the Kiev Women's Educational Institute consisted of biology, physiology, psychology, hygiene, pedagogy, children literature, play and manual work. The institute possessed its own educational laboratory, public kindergartens, in which students trained by working with children. The society propagandised by organising public lectures and discussions in order to introduce Froebel's system to the public in Kiev. It organized short-term teacher courses that were very well attended too. 550 teachers took the course in 1911 and 850 in 1912.⁵³

At the beginning of the twentieth century in Moscow a wide ranging set of kindergartens were opened and by the 1910 in Moscow, there were eighty-two private kindergartens that accommodated twenty-five or more children. But there were also kindergartens situated in private houses referred to as family kindergartens. The latter usually enrolled a smaller number of children.⁵⁴

A. B. Lamprecht, who was of German origin, ran a typically "orthodox" Froebelian kindergarten in Moscow. It was a part of a private school, owned by her. It was situated in a large luxurious flat. Twelve children, seven girls and five boys, aged 5 to 8 attended it. The programme consisted of different kinds of play, exercises and occupations. The main objectives, as they were stated by Ms Lamprecht in the programme of the school were the development of children's self-directed activity, manual training and aesthetics. Other activities included sewing, weaving, building, paper cutting and modelling, paper folding, drawing, German language lessons, singing, gymnastics, dancing and arithmetic (the numbers from 1 to 20).⁵⁵ Teaching a foreign language was not an exclusive practice in the Froebelian kindergartens for middle and upper class children in Russia. As is well known, a whole generation of the Russian aristocracy was brought up by foreign nannies and having a good

command of foreign languages was common among them. This tradition was accepted by the new urban middle class, during the period of industrialisation in Russia and the Froebelian kindergartens, which were mainly private, included foreign language programmes in their curricula. This approach was facilitated by the fact that many Froebelian teachers in Russia were German in origin⁵⁶ and young women from German minority ethnic backgrounds attended Froebelian teacher training courses in Germany. But the foreign language lessons that the private kindergartens provided were not exclusively German, as the most common language studied in Russia was French there were schools that taught children in French. Among them was the kindergarten established by A.B.Levickaya in Moscow in 1902, where children were taught French by a Swiss teacher trained at a Froebel school in Switzerland. Also, in Jewish kindergartens, children were taught in Yiddish.

Although many kindergartens followed Froebel's system closely, some of the kindergartens modified Froebel's pedagogy in an effort to provide nationally specific education to young Russian middle class children. Attempts were made to transform Froebel's methods by adopting the ideas about children's education of K.D. Ushinsky, E. N.Vodovosova, L.N. Tolstoy, A. S.Simonovich and other Russian educators. This may be seen as an attempt to accommodate Russian nationalism, which emerged in the period of industrialisation among the new urban middle class (the new bourgeoisie and the professional middle class). In these programmes Froebel's method was taught as a single discipline that consisted of the gifts and the occupations. This approach was taken in many schools, even when they were not identified by their owners as Froebelian. They included in their curriculum, as they put it, the discipline of 'Froebelian activities' or 'Froebel's works', Froebel's gifts and manual work. This approach was adopted by the first paid kindergarten boarding school for deaf children founded in Moscow by F.A. Ray in 1900.⁵⁷ There, 'Froebelian activity' was part of the curriculum along with arithmetic, exercises, reading and writing, drawing and lip reading. Froebelian methods were presented as a separate discipline, which comprised the gifts, the occupations and other handwork.⁵⁸ This approach became very common and made Froebel's kindergarten the normal practice in Russian pre-school settings.

Froebel revised

The development of the movement for the 'New Education' in the USA and Europe at the beginning of the 20th century was a major influence on Froebelian educators worldwide. Many of them, who had been exposed to the theories of G. Stanley Hall and John Dewey,

broke from the 'orthodox' Froebelian pedagogy and rebuilt their own educational philosophy by interpreting Froebel in the context of the labour school and progressive education.

As in England, Germany and the USA, Settlement movement was closely associated with the kindergarten. Jane Addams, the founder of Hull House in Chicago visited Tolstoy and the anarchist Petr Kropotkin visited Hull House in 1899. Another visitor was Alexander Zelenko (1871-1953) who not only went to Hull House but to the University Settlement in New York also. On his return, together with Stanislav Shatsky and Luiza Karlovna Schleger he founded the first Moscow Settlement.⁵⁹

Luiza Schleger, who was the founder of the first public kindergarten in Moscow and an active member of the Moscow Settlement group, suggested an interpretation of Froebel's pedagogy based on progressive educational philosophy. Luiza Schleger's educational concept was developed through her practical work. She belonged to the generation of early twentieth century well educated, independent Russian women who were determined to pursue professional careers and to reform society by creating a practical and theoretical system for the public education of working class children. Her contribution to the introduction of the idea of pre-school education for children of low-social class backgrounds in Pre-Revolutionary Russia and to the creation of the socialist pre-school education strategy in the early days of the Revolution is well recognised in Russia regardless of the criticism of her during Stalinist period.⁶⁰ Her reputation changed dramatically during her life.

Her work was defined as socialist in pre-revolutionary Russia. The Settlement was closed by the state in 1908 because of its socialist philosophy and the school was described as a 'communist school' in the local public press.⁶¹ Nevertheless Schleger's pedagogy was signified as petty-bourgeois in the Soviet Union.

Her professional education began in the Women's gymnasium in Saratov, where she received her training. After two years experience working in a primary school in Tambov, Luiza Schleger continued her study in Moscow and then she worked as a teacher at orphanages in Moscow.⁶² Like many of Froebel's followers, who embraced the philosophy of the new education, Patty Smith Hill in the USA,⁶³ for example, and Emmy Walser in Switzerland⁶⁴ Luiza Schleger interpreted Froebelian ideas broadly, but in contrast to Patty Smith Hill's interpretation of Froebel, she, along with her colleagues from the Settlement, adapted Froebel's ideas to the new notion of the labour school. In contrast to the practice, present in pre-school educational settings in Russia and other countries, which based pre-school programmes on Froebel's gifts and occupations but not on Froebel's theory, the Settlement kindergarten

programme emphasised the exploration of Froebel's philosophy, not his practical method. The Settlement work was research orientated. It became a centre where innovative ideas about education were nurtured and as a result of their research experience they introduced an interpretation of Froebel's pedagogy that offered new possibilities for understanding Froebel's idea of the value of childhood.

In her books, *Materials for Discussions with Young Children* and *Practical Work in the Kindergarten* (1915, re-published in 1923) Shleger recalled her experience in the Settlement. She described her experimental methods for educating young children in *Practical Work in the Kindergarten*. Both books were very influential during the early years of the new Soviet state. Moreover, the latter served as a guide for organizing nursery schools in Soviet Russia

The kindergarten at the Settlement was organized around the effort to educate urban working class children. At the start the programme was purely Froebelian, the work was organized follow Froebelian day schedule, but during the course of the work in the Settlement, Schleger and her colleagues from the Settlement came to value the idea of *svobodnoe vospitanie* or free upbringing and employed it in their work with children. But she abandoned this approach not long after she implemented it and free upbringing was not present in her work after 1909. After that, the activities in the Settlement kindergarten were strongly based on scheduled activities.

Schleger conceptualised the play materials differently than Froebel, she created her own materials, including sand, clay, wood, which she called 'vital materials' and large block building materials. Like Vodovosova, she believed that the source for learning materials should be from the environment that surrounds the children and she argued that the environment mediates the child's development and Russian children must be provided in the kindergartens with materials that are natural for Russian people or suitable to Russian traditions.⁶⁵

The Russian Revolution

The Revolution led to a new, dramatic turn in the fortunes of Froebelian ideas in Russian preschool education. One of the first steps in transforming society was expressed through the Lenin's decrees on education. The new government intended to provide education free of charge for everybody. Subsequently the private Froebelian kindergartens were transformed into public kindergartens. Nevertheless, Froebel's pedagogy was not rejected completely at the beginning of the new era of transformation. The time when Froebel was to be classified a provider of bourgeois education had not arrived yet.⁶⁶ The Froebelian societies continued their work, even though a new, second Froebelian institute was opened in Kiev in 1918 by the

Jewish society, Tarbut. It organized Jewish teacher training courses, aimed at training teachers for Jewish primary schools. The students were taught Judaism, Jewish history, Education, Ukrainian and other disciplines.⁶⁷

The Bolsheviks belief in the power of pre-school education was intense. Anatoly Vasilievich Lunacharsky (1875-1933), who was the commissar⁶⁸ of Education Narkompros⁶⁹ expressed socialist anxiety about preschool education in the “Declaration of Preschool Education” in 1920.⁷⁰ He said, ‘The major reason for the government’s concern and very special emphasis on preschool education were the anxieties and the expectations, which the fighters for socialism placed on the approaching century. All socialist transformation will lose its purpose, if in the present or in the future, we do not arrange for the socialist re-education of the humanity⁷¹. Childhood was seen as an advanced ideological battleground and in the first step towards ‘re-educating the humanity,’ 5000 kindergartens, nurseries and child care centres were opened in Soviet Russia by the new state.⁷²

The intelligentsia, had been the major engine of all democratic reforms in pre-Revolutionary Russia, but were not supportive of the new reforms that the Bolshevik government undertook. Instead, the intelligentsia reacted negatively to the new changes in education, a reaction that was not expected by the Bolsheviks.⁷³ Teachers undertook strikes and there was no support from the officials of the ministry of education for the socialist reforms either. Some Froebelian educators clearly declared their disagreement with the new policy. For example, Evgeniy Nikolayevich Medinsky (1885- 1957), a very prominent figure in Soviet education and known for his work in the History of Education,⁷⁴ who lectured at the Froebel Institute at Saint Petersburg, criticized the policy of the Narkompros and proposed the organization of public education on the basis of self-government and autonomy.⁷⁵

The Bolsheviks began considering a new strategy of involving the intelligentsia in their reforms. Lenin insisted that it was necessary to embrace bourgeois knowledge and culture in an effort to win the struggle against the opposition of the scholarly community.⁷⁶ In order to identify the policy of pre-school education in Socialist Russia, the newly formed government attracted prominent and socialist oriented figures, supporters from the fields of pedagogy and psychology such as S. T. Shatsky , B.N Shatskay , L. K. Schleger, P. P. Blonsky, L.I. Chulickay, E.I. Tiheeva, V. Schmidt.⁷⁷ Luiza Schleger was one of the first that offered her help to the Narkompros and she invited S.T. Shatsky and Shatskaya to join her there. The Bolsheviks were aware that they needed competent experts whose support could raise the credibility of the new educational reforms among the educators, who were not ready to accept

the reforms. Although expert participation in the authorization and legislation of the new pre-school educational policy was crucial, the leading role belonged to Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya (1869-1939), Lenin's wife. Krupskaya earned her reputation as one of the leading educationalists in the Party. After the October Revolution Krupskaya had been appointed by Lenin as a deputy commissar of the Narkompros. She had no professional background in education, a fact that was mentioned by John Dewey in his account of their meeting in 1928.⁷⁸ Dewey described her limited competency as 'strange'. Although she established her reputation as a party leader in education by writing series of articles about socialist education and the labour school in particular, among the experts of the Narkompros, she was referred to in the beginning by them as, 'madam Lenin who fell on our heads from Zurich'.⁷⁹ Krupskaya committed herself to the reform of educational settings in Russia, and to the aims of the labour school. By her intense work she gained a reputation in the field. Her influence on Soviet pre-school education did not end with her death in 1939. Her authority had been recognised from the scholars and practitioners until the end of the Soviet Era. She participated in the creation of the first directives on public education and in the organisation of the public kindergartens around the country.

A review of her published comments on Froebelian pedagogy⁸⁰ shows that she was familiar with the leading educational system in pre-school education and with Froebel's pedagogy in particular. In her article *About the socialist school*, published a few months after the Revolution in 1918, she regarded the Froebelian pre-school system positively as a whole but she demonstrated that the religious aspects of Froebel's system were not acceptable to the new Marxist pre-school education. She said,

The first kindergarten was founded in 1837 by Froebel. Although Froebel placed too much emphasis on religion and children's obedience the advantage was that the Froebelian kindergarten applied a range of tools, which were appropriate to the child's nature. He organized activities that stimulated the development of the child's senses – sight, hearing, etc. As a result Froebel's kindergarten became famous and was a great success.⁸¹

She recognized the significance of Froebel's system in developing the pre-school pedagogy in nineteenth century and his impact on emerging new theories about early childhood education in the twentieth century, such as the system of Maria Montessori, who, she thought, developed Froebel's ideas further.⁸²

The attitude to Froebelian practice during the period of the establishment of a Marxist theory of education was determined by the struggle for political power in the new Soviet state. The Bolsheviks realized that Marxist ideology had to be interpreted in its relevance to the emerging situation and it had to be developed in the new context. It was a time of debate and discussions about major social issues relating to education, such as the family, education and the liberation of women in the new society. Issues which were central to the emergence of a new policy towards pre-school education in Russia. Froebelian pedagogy, however, was not abandoned during the first years of the new educational strategy. Even though, Froebelian philosophy was articulated to the new labour school curriculum in the Soviet school. In the view of Stanislav Shatsky, a leading educationalist in the period,⁸³ Froebelian ideas about work suited the socialist concept of the labour school very well.⁸⁴

The first systematic instruction about the education of pre-school children was produced in 1919, during the Civil war by the members of the Narkompros, which included Dora Lazurkina, the head of the Narkompros department of Pre-school education from 1918 to 1922, Vera Schmidt, now an advocate of psychoanalysis and E.I. Teheeva, who had been trained in Montessori's methods in Italy. The instruction mainly addressed the equipment to be used and the major scheduled activities for children aged 3-7. This period was proclaimed by the authors as one in which the development of the human personality was of major significance. The instruction synthesized Montessori's ideas, the development of sensitivity and language with Froebelian and Deweyan ideas. But Froebelian practices predominated. It recommended the development of children's representations, senses and language in free work-play. No planning and no directions from the teachers were recommended. The teachers were given instruction to support children's self-activity. The choices of activity were supposed to be initiated by the children, not by the teachers. No timetables were recommended in the kindergartens. The major activities listed in the instruction were, art, handwork, cutting, block building, sand play, free play, signing, rhythmic movements, discussions, narration, growing plants, looking after animals, collecting natural materials and using them in children's work. No mathematics lessons were recommended in this instruction. Children had to acquire mathematical knowledge 'naturally', by observing real life, from specific visual material, from play and by participating in other activities.⁸⁵

Two main events in the party's history had the major influence on preschool education in Soviet Russia and subsequently on the future of Froebelian pedagogy in Soviet Russia. The first was Lenin's death and the election of Stalin as the party leader and the second was

Trotsky's opposition to Stalin. Froebel's pedagogy was criticised or his name was surrounded by silence. An evaluation of Froebel conducted by Frolova during the Stalinist period illustrates the formal view of the party.⁸⁶ She described Froebel as an idealist-mystic whose pedagogy was bourgeois and reactionary. His methodical approaches are held to be pedantic, formalised and dry. They insist on mechanical imitations rather than creativity, put limitations to the child's self-activity and Froebelian kindergartens cultivate a petty-bourgeois moral style. Other arguments for the rejection of Froebel's system were employed and critical statements about Froebel were expressed by significant figures in Russian education such as L.N. Tolstoy, K.D. Ushinsky, V.I. Vodovosov, E.N. Vodovosova and E.I. Konrady. Often, the critical statements were extracted from the context in which they were made and used to support the construction of a critical attitude to Friedrich Froebel and his work.

Conclusion

In spite of a tendency, encouraged by many Russian authors, towards a view of Russian society and culture as exceptional, the progress of the Froebelian movement in Russia during the period discussed here shows many features in common with the movement in the United States, England and other countries.⁸⁷ The support of aristocratic women, especially with German connections, in its earliest phase was not uncommon in other countries as was the involvement of liberal intellectuals. Another characteristic was a tendency for supporters of the kindergarten to have religious beliefs at variance with those of the majority. In Russia where the Orthodox Church was so dominant and central to Russian identity, many Jews, as in Germany and England, were attracted to the Froebel movement as it did not insist on religious conformity. Freedom of religious belief was also associated with the women's movement, which, in turn, was often associated with oppositional political activity, sometimes of a revolutionary nature. In Russia, which underwent a period of repression following the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, the kindergarten for many of its supporters held out the promise of reform and liberty. It was this that motivated the move towards the establishment of the free kindergartens and provision for the children of the working class. This occurred almost simultaneously with a similar orientation in the United States and England although the scale of the activity varied considerably from nation to nation. In Russia this current of social reform within the kindergarten movement and its slightly oppositional connotations carried on into the early years of the Soviet State only to be crushed by Stalin's counter-revolution.

This was an experience unique to Russia and Russian exceptionalism may also be observed in the insistence of many on adapting Froebel's methods to Russian conditions. But for every

instance of the singularity of the kindergarten in Russia there are many more, such as the link between the Settlement movement and the kindergarten which show its affiliation with the international movement. Of those that have not been mentioned so far the most prominent is the professionalizing aspects of the movement in Russia. As elsewhere, Froebelians in Russia set up networks of societies and publications but above all, they provided training for women in child care and early childhood education and thereby elevated their status as occupations in addition to providing an entry into the paid labour market for middle class women.

Notes

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¹¹ Shabaeva, *Istoriya Pedagogiki*.

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³ Yadeshko, Vera .S., Sahina V.A., *Doshkol'naia Pedagogika*. Moskva: Prosveshtenie, 1978. See also Helmut Konig, *Friedrich Wilhelm August Froebel 1782-1852: Scenes from the Life and Work of a Great Educator and Lover of Children*, trans. Melanie Selfe .Berlin: Volk und Wissen Volkseigner, 1982.

⁴ Larissa . Zakharova, "Autocracy, Bureaucracy, and the Reform of the 1860s in Russia", *Soviet Studies in History*, no. Spring (1991).

⁵ Toby W. Clyman and Judith Vowles, eds., *Russia through Women's Eyes: Autobiographies from Tsarist Russia, Russian Literature and Thought* . New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1996.

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⁹ Kniazev, *Genezis Vysheva Pedagogicheskogo Obrazovania V Rassii V Xix - Nachale Xx Vekov*

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¹³ Ivan.V. Chuvashhev, "Vidnie Teoretiki I Practiki Doshkol'nogo Vaspitania Vtoroi Poloviny Xix B," in *Istoria Pedagogike*, ed. M.K. Shabaeva (Moskva: Prosvishtenie, 1981).

¹⁴ Princess Helen , was called by the Tsar Nicholas I, 'the scholar of our family'.

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¹⁶ Nicholas Valentine Riasanovsky, *Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles: A Study of Romantic Ideology, Harvard Historical Studies; V. 61* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952).

¹⁷ Vasili I. Vodovosov, *Izbrannie Pedagogicheskie Sochinenia* (Moskva: Pedagogika, 1986, 38).

¹⁸ Vodovosov, "Izbrannie Pedagogicheskie Sochinenia", 52

¹⁹ Vodovosov, "Izbrannie Pedagogicheskie Sochinenia"57 .

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- ²⁶ Christiane Weber, *Minna Schellhorn 1829-1910* (2001 [cited 13th January 2005]); available from <http://www.ozpod.com/150/schellhorn.html>.
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development of the society (vol. and 2; 1925-29) and many other manuals of History of Education for university students. Professor MGPI (Moscow State Educational Institute V.I. Lenin). He was involved in the editing and publishing of the works of S.T.Shatsky and A.S.Makarenko.

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