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**ON THE PROBLEM OF CHILD STUDIES  
IN PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL HERITAGE  
OF A. LAZURSKIY (EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY)**

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**Abstract**

Exploring the nature of a child, the child's personality, individual traits of character as well as peculiarities of formation and development in educational process is one of the main problems of modern pedagogy. The most significant contribution among scientists in the field of study of child and child's individual features was made by A. Lazurskiy (1874–1917). The author determines that A. Lazurskiy was inclined to employ psychological knowledge in teaching practice and was deeply convinced that upbringing schoolchildren can rely on detailed and planned studies of child nature by means of psychological and pedagogical methods. Subsequently, the author demonstrates that A. Lazurskiy developed a versatile method for a holistic research of the personality of a child in the educational process — the natural experiment, and was the author of “experimental classes” as a valuable educational tools.

**Keywords**

A. Lazurskiy, the identity of a child, schoolchildren, individual characteristics and features, method of natural experiment, psychological characterization

The period of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is a rich source of ideas and experiences which are consonant with the modern challenges of pedagogy. Historical necessity and fundamental social changes of that period set clear tasks for pedagogy: to understand accumulated experience about authoritarian school and develop new theoretical principles of personally-oriented concepts in upbringing and education. A child, with its natural uniqueness, age-related peculiarities, physical and spiritual individuality, became the center of the educational process. The child's interests defined the purpose, content, organization and methods of teaching interaction which triggered educational transformation, and consequently required scrutiny. According to Sukhomlinskaya, it was in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when “particularly favourable basis for the development of new science that would unite psychology and pedagogy-pedology”<sup>1</sup> was formed.

Under the influence of psychological and educational representatives of scientific elite of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as V. Bekhterev, M. Hundobina, V. Kashchenko, A. Krohiosa, G. Rossolimo, I. Pavlov, M. Pirogov, I. Sechenov, I. Sikorskiy, C. Ushynskiy or P. Yurkevych, the researchers of early 20<sup>th</sup> century — S. Anan'yin, P. Kapteryev, A. Lazurskiy, N. Lange, P. Lesgaft, A. Nechaev and N. Rumyantsev expanded the approaches to the study of child contributing new conceptual ideas of pedagogical anthropology, investigated patterns of mental and physical development of children in the process of purposeful education and developed their own method of study of the student. It may be said that a “pedological revolution” took place during this period. The main issues and key methodological principles became the core of a holistic examination of child using experimental methods, including observation, biographical method, experiments in natural and laboratory environments, the method of studying child's labor products, questionnaires and testing. The data obtained during the research have significantly broadened the understanding of child's mental nature and mechanisms of its development, thus yielding adequate experimental and mathematically verified information about the properties and capabilities of a particular student. It was a major step towards building a new school which could meet public demands, educating teachers for such school, organizing scientific and educational centers and providing student-focused learning.

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<sup>1</sup> O. Sukhomlinska, Problemy rozvytku osobystosti v istorychnomu konteksti psykholohii ta pedahohiki, Shliakh osvity 2, 2006, p. 42.

Analysis of educational literature has shown that the issue of psychological and educational child studies was addressed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by such well-known Ukrainian researchers as G. Ball, N. Dichek, S. Zolotukhina, V. Kravets<sup>2</sup>, B. Kurylo, M. Levkovskiy<sup>3</sup> or O. Sukhomlinska<sup>4</sup>. It should be noted that in some works it is extensively covered personology component of that time period science, mentioned different concepts of pedagogical theories, which have been practically implemented in pedagogy<sup>5</sup>.

Following an analysis of primary sources, it was found that among the different approaches to the study of a child's nature, formation of child's personality and its individual features, which were developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the most significant contribution to the field of study of the child and child's individual characteristics in national educational psychology was made by A. Lazurskiy, an outstanding scientist and representative of experimental pedagogy.

A. Lazurskiy was a remarkable scientist of his time. His psychological ideas were innovative and original, yet teaching occupied an equally important place in his work. As an outstanding educators teacher, who was able to present a subject in highly interesting manner, A. Lazurskiy paid much attention to the dissemination of psychological knowledge among teachers and educators who attended his lectures. He was invited to speak at several institutions of higher education in Petersburg, Moscow, Kharkov and in the Poltava province. He took active part in the organization of several universities and research institutions in St. Petersburg, as well as organised a number of congresses dedicated to educational psychology and experimental pedagogy. His reports were mainly devoted to methods of objective research of the child, especially schoolchildren. Elaborating the ideas of J.A. Comenius (Komenskiy), John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, F. Froebel and C. Ushynskiy, A. Lazurskiy advocated usage of scientifically based teaching practice relying on psychological knowledge and emphasized the necessity to consider the fact that "the identity of a child

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<sup>2</sup> V.P. Kravets, *Zarubizhna shkola i pedahohika XX stolittia*, Ternopil 1996.

<sup>3</sup> M.V. Levkivskiy, *Istoriia pedahohiky*, Kyiv 2003.

<sup>4</sup> O. Sukhomlinska, *Problema "pryroda-vykhovannia" v pedahohichnii teorii ta praktytsi Ukrainy 20–30 rokiv*, *Pedahohika ta psykholohiia* 2, 1997. *Ukrainska pedahohika v personaliakh*, 1, Kyiv 2005.

<sup>5</sup> I. Bech, *Osobystisno-orientovanyi pidkhid u vykhovanni*, [in:] *Profesiina osvita: pedahohika ta psykholohiia*, Kyiv 2000, pp. 331–350. B. Stuparyk, *Ukrainska natsionalna shkola: vytoky, stanovlennia*, Kyiv 1998.

is in the process of formation, it has not assumed a specific, complete shape, but it already has a certain direction of development (*endopsyhika*) which can equally hinder education process, or promote educational success”<sup>6</sup>. The scientist asserted that teachers should benefit from the opportunity to provide comprehensive development of students using children’s data obtained in the course of carefully planned research conducted by means of psycho-pedagogical observation and experiment<sup>7</sup>.

Therefore, the aim of this article is to analyze the concepts of Alexander Fedorovich Lazurskiy (1874–1917) relating to the complex psychological and educational research of child’s personality as a basis of educational process.

The idea of a holistic study of student’s personality in the creative legacy of Alexander Lazurskiy was formed gradually. His attempts to devise a “natural classification of characters” (1906)<sup>8</sup> served to assert the necessity of a “holistic study of personality, with all its individual peculiarities” (1917)<sup>9</sup>. Although Lazurskiy’s first research was concerned with adult personality and their individual characteristics, the researcher soon concluded that “the study of an adult should go through the study of child’s personal features. It helps to understand how certain personality features accrue and emerge, how they change and become more complex with age”<sup>10</sup>. Lazurskiy argued that “The identity of the individual depends not only from its natural features, but also on education and social environment”<sup>11</sup> and rightly believed that “the purpose of education is to provide complete, the most intensive development of the individual according to his individual abilities and skills”<sup>12</sup>.

According to the recollections of his student and colleague, V. Myasishcheva, A. Lazurskiy held to the position that “personality is a unity of mental processes and human properties, where physiological and mental — are different sides of a single process, [...] and this process should be studied in the unity of the

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<sup>6</sup> A.F. Lazurskiy, *Lichnost’ i vospitanie*, [in:] *Trudy’ 3 Vserossiyskogo s’ezda po e’ksperimental’noj pedagogike v Petrograde*, 1917, p. 88.

<sup>7</sup> A.F. Lazurskiy, *E’ksperimental’ny’e uroki i ix znachenie v texnike vospitaniia*, [in:] *Trudy’ 1 Vserossiyskogo s’ezda po semejnomu vospitaniyu v Petrograde*, 1, 1914, pp. 204–209.

<sup>8</sup> A.F. Lazurskiy, *Ocherkinauki o xarakterax*, Sankt-Peterburg 1906.

<sup>9</sup> A.F. Lazurskiy, *O vzaimnoj sviazi*, pp. 87–94.

<sup>10</sup> A.F. Lazurskiy, *O vzaimnoj sviazi dushevny’x svojstv i sposobax eyo izucheniia*, *Voprosy’ filosofii i psixologii* 53, 1900, p. 230.

<sup>11</sup> A.F. Lazurskiy, *Ob estestvennom*, pp. 182–183.

<sup>12</sup> Same.

experiment and the observation of free labor and gaming activities based on the personality characteristics and personality types”<sup>13</sup>.

By entrusting the task of psycho-pedagogical monitoring of a child to those “who knows investigated one’s well and can watch him in the classroom and outside it”<sup>14</sup>, Lazurskiy noted that “for the teacher who teaches his students, [...] it is undesirable to set out from subjective perceptions about character, that it is personalities which are interesting. If we would guess the character of another person by subjective method or «by intuition», naturally, feelings will play a huge role (sympathy and antipathy, fear, respect, compassion, etc.). Therefore, during the observation we need to be strictly objective”<sup>15</sup>. According to Lazurskiy, the study of personality should begin with the application of the “clinical” method [meaning objective — I.V.] of observation of mental characteristics of children (mostly preschool and school age children)<sup>16</sup>. To make pedagogical observations as objective as possible Lazurskiy posited a number of requirements for their implementation: 1) conducting the study of on individual with previously compiled program; 2) recording all experimental observations, all facts that somehow characterize a certain person in a diary; 3) monitoring should be conducted only by those people who know the investigated individual well<sup>17</sup>. Lazurskiy attached great importance to the well-formulated application of personality research and he should be given credit for being the original creator of such scheme. Later on, Personality Research Program developed by A. Lazurskiy became the basis for similar programs in Soviet psychology and pedagogy, which are still used to study children.

As Lazurskiy saw it, the next step in the study of the child should be composing detailed psychological characteristics on the basis of “clinical” observations. The main requirement for their preparation was their non-abstractness: “description of a certain limitation or feature of personality cannot be done in general terms, without giving any specific external

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<sup>13</sup>V.N. Myasishhev, Na puti sozdaniya psixologicheskoy teorii lichnosti, [in:] Voprosy’ psixologii, Leningrad 1925, p. 34.

<sup>14</sup>A.F. Lazurskiy, Ob estestvennom e’ksperimente, [in:] Trudy’ 1 Vserossiyskogo s’ezda po e’ksperimental’noj pedagogike v Sankt-Peterburge, 1911, p. 246.

<sup>15</sup>A.F. Lazurskiy, Psixologiya obshhaia i e’ksperimental’naia, Leningrad 1925, pp. 45–47.

<sup>16</sup>Same.

<sup>17</sup>A.F. Lazurskiy, O vzaimnoj sviazi, p. 246.

manifestations of the quality or the facts based on which we have arrived at similar conclusions”<sup>18</sup>. This requirement on compiling psychological and educational characteristics of school pupils has remained valid to this day. Furthermore, Lazurskiy advised educational practitioners to analyze such features, compare, summarize and highlight typical similarities. Lazurskiy described his experience of students studying according to this method in the book “School characteristics” (1908). Consequently, 18 students of Second St. Petersburg Cadet Corps aged mainly 12–13.5 years were studied during Fall – Spring semesters of 1904–1905 with the purpose of experimental verification of the hypothesis. Lazurskiy and his disciples (E. Hlotov, N. Kenel, Z. Kalliander, S. Lihosherstov, P. Spirin and L. Palmin) drafted student’s personal characteristics, based on a comprehensive range of actual data, which not only included displays of various mental emotions of the studied children, but also introduced descriptions of the circumstances in which they arose and were encountered<sup>19</sup>.

While gathering material for school characteristics, the scientists worked on improving the method of objective observation, thus developing a new method which is well-known to modern educators and psychologists as natural experiment. Nevertheless, the scientists did not think at the time that the method was something completely new, and saw it only as a further improvement of Lazurskiy’s “clinical” observation<sup>20</sup>. A distinctive feature of the new method was that students were unaware of taking part in an experiment. Creating a natural activity (albeit deliberately organized using specially selected games, gymnastic exercises, training of manual labor and lessons as such) allowed one to avoid the influence of subjective factors and make the experiment resemble real life. Lazurskiy found that the richest material in terms of exploring student’s individuality was yielded by experimental lessons in Arithmetic, Russian, Science and Drawing. These classes allowed prepared teachers or tutors to observe students in a natural environment, record individual manifestations of personality that are specific to this type of lesson, and then develop a plan for its implementation, which would create appropriate conditions under which children may demonstrate their individual traits most clearly, simultaneously giving teachers the opportunity

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<sup>18</sup> A.F. Lazurskiy, *Shkol’ny’e xarakteristiki*, Sankt-Peterburg 1908, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Same.

<sup>20</sup> *Trudy* 1 Vserossiyskogo s’ezda, pp. 142–143.

to contribute to child's development ("peat theory" by A. Lazurskiy, that is the gradual transformation of new forms into established, internalised ones, their transition from *ekzopoverhnia* (exo-surface) into the depth of *endoyadro* (endo-core).

However, experimental lessons conducted according to a previously prepared plan did not go beyond the curriculum and did not disrupt the normal rhythm of school life. Lazurskiy remarked that "In the natural experimental study of personality we do not use artificial methods, do not conduct experiments in artificial laboratory conditions, we do not isolate the child from the usual conditions of life, but we conduct the experiment in conjunction with the natural forms of the environment. We explore the personality with life itself, and therefore gain access to all the influences of identity on the environment and environment on personality. We do not investigate individual mental processes, as is usually done, but the personality as a whole. However, we do not use artificial materials but use the objects of school education"<sup>21</sup>. The study of students using the methodology of school experiment, "would help the teacher to deal with the shortcomings of academic work at school with symptoms of overloading student with subjects, and provide an opportunity to explore their individual characteristics and abilities"<sup>22</sup>.

Natural experimental study of personality developed by A. Lazurskiy included the following steps: 1) conducting observations of certain students to a pre-designed plan with careful recording of results in the course of several weeks; 2) preparation of detailed psychological characteristics of the studied students; 3) exploring psychological possibilities of such lessons in Mathematics, Russian, Science, Gymnastics, Manual Labor, etc. (with each subject having a different capacity for disclosing certain individual mental capabilities of students: Russian and Literature offer a chance to study individual memory, thinking, perception, imagination, emotional and moral sphere, as well as creative potential; arithmetic can manifest traits of mental activity, memorizing poems enables the study of memory, the ability to concentrate or get distracted, the speed of involvement into work, etc.); 4) conducting experimental lessons in association with teachers on the basis of curriculum materials of the aforementioned subjects, with special tasks developed for the studied students; 5) reg-

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<sup>21</sup> A.F. Lazurskiy, *Ob estestvennom e'ksperimente*, [in:] *Trudy' 1 Vserossiyskogo s'ezda po e'ksperimental'noj pedagogike v Sankt-Peterburge*, 1911, pp. 186–187.

<sup>22</sup> Same.

istration of all intellectual and emotional manifestations which are associated with those tasks<sup>23</sup>.

In the early 1904, C. Ushinskiy Department of Education was established at the Pedagogical Museum of Military Schools, with the aim of making the scientific study of human a subject of education. The purpose was to be achieved through the dissemination of knowledge about the psychological and physiological characteristics of school and preschool children; creation of favorable conditions for scientific research in pedology, training researchers in psychophysical nature of the child; acquainting teachers and educators with methods and techniques for the study of individual characteristics of students; and finally, collecting scientifically proven factual material, which in future would become the basis for school reform<sup>24</sup>. There, under the direction of A. Lazurskiy, researchers and school teachers conducted similar experimental lessons, which yielded valuable material for the further study of students. The results were published under the editorship of A. Lazurskiy in the collective volume entitled “Natural Experiments and their Application in Schools” (1918)<sup>25</sup>. The scientist himself rightly observed that “these lessons have a great future as they give a rich material for pedagogy and will help teachers and in the education and comprehensive development of student’s personality” [same].

## CONCLUSIONS

Although A. Lazurskiy did not have enough time to complete his research, his work had a considerable influence on the further development of child and educational psychology. The natural experiment method was the most popular in pedagogy throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with every handbook on pedagogy and psychology containing a reference to it, which cannot be said with respect to other methods developed within experimental pedagogy in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>23</sup> A.F. Lazurskiy, *Ob estestvennom e'ksperimente*, [in:] *Trudy' 1 Vserossiyskogo s'ezda po e'ksperimental'noj pedagogike v Sankt-Peterburge*, 1911, p. 187.

<sup>24</sup> *Trudy' 1 Vserossiyskogo s'ezda po pedagogicheskoy psixologii v Sankt-Peterburge*, 1906, 280 pp.

<sup>25</sup> A.F. Lazurskiy, *Estestvenny'i e'ksperiment i ego shkol'noe primeneniye*, Petrograd 1918, 192 pp.

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**O KWESTII BADAŃ ROZWOJU DZIECI W PSYCHOLOGICZNYM  
I PEDAGOGICZNYM DZIEDZICTWIE A. LAZURSKIEGO  
(POCZĄTEK XX WIEKU)**

**Streszczenie**

Wśród rozmaitych metodologii badań natury dziecka, rozwoju jego osobowości i indywidualnych cech charakterologicznych z początków XX w. największy wkład w obszarze psychologii edukacyjnej położył A. Lazurski, znakomity naukowiec i przedstawiciel pedagogii eksperymentalnej. Jego oryginalne i nowatorskie idee czyniły go wyjątkowym naukowcem tej epoki. A. Lazurski opowiadał się za stosowaniem metod nauczania wywiedzionych na gruncie nauki oraz wiedzy psychologicznej, podkreślał konieczność wzięcia pod uwagę tego, że „tożsamość dziecka dopiero się kształtuje, nie osiągnęła jeszcze konkretnej, pełnej formy, ale wykazuje już pewne ukierunkowanie rozwojowe (endopsychika), które może zarówno wspomagać, jak i utrudniać procesy edukacyjne”. Lazurski dowodził, że nauczyciele powinni skorzystać z możliwości wszechstronnego kształcenia uczniów w oparciu o wiedzę o dziecku uzyskaną w trakcie starannie zaplanowanych badań, prowadzonych z użyciem narzędzi psycho-pedagogicznej obserwacji i eksperymentu.

Powierzając zadanie psychopedagogicznego monitorowania dziecka tym, „którzy zgłębiają jego naturę i mogą je obserwować zarówno w sali szkolnej, jak i poza nią”, Lazurski zwrócił uwagę na fakt, że „dla nauczyciela, który uczy swoich uczniów [...] jest rzeczą niepożądaną, aby polegać na subiektywnej ocenie charakteru; to osobowości są naprawdę interesujące”. Aby osiągnąć jak najdalej posunięty obiektywizm pedagogicznych obserwacji, Lazurski postulował szereg wymogów, jakie musiała ona spełniać. Zgodnie ze stworzoną przez niego koncepcją kolejnym krokiem w badaniach rozwoju i osobowości dziecka powinno być sformułowanie szczegółowej psychologicznej charakterystyki na podstawie spostrzeżeń „klinicznych”. W trakcie zbierania danych do profili charakterologicznych uczniów Lazurski starał się ulepszyć metody obiektywnej obserwacji, co zaowocowało stworzeniem nowej metodologii, która jest dziś dobrze znana wychowawcom i psychologom pod nazwą naturalnego eksperymentu. Zastosowanie naturalnej aktywności pozwoliło na eliminację czynników subiektywnych, dzięki czemu eksperyment opierał się na sytuacji zbliżonej do tych, jakie występują w rzeczywistości.

Choć A. Lazurski nie zdołał zakończyć swoich badań, jego praca miała znaczący wpływ na dalszy rozwój psychologii edukacyjnej i psychologii dziecka. W ciągu XX w. metoda naturalnego eksperymentu zyskała ogromną popularność — jest bowiem wspominana w każdym podręczniku pedagogiki i psychologii, czego nie można powiedzieć o innych metodach stworzonych w ramach pedagogiki eksperymentalnej na początku XX w.

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