THE HUMANITARIAN PEDAGOGY OF
SUZHOMLINSKY AND THE APPLICATION OF
HIS IDEAS IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT
The humanistic research to education is based on the precedence of universal human values, the significance of human life and health, the promotion of the free development of personality. The well-known educator Vasili Sukhomlinsky (1918–1970), contributed a lot to the humanitarian pedagogical beliefs of the 20th century, composing a pedagogical system in the center of which there is the personality of a child, the intense interest of a teacher for the personal characteristics of a pupil, the development of all his/her abilities and faculties. Sukhomlinsky created a new type of school – “the school of joy” – oriented on the optimistic confrontation of a child, the confidence and respect for a child, the search of “intellectual communication” between the child and the teacher, which is based on interconnection, mutual understanding, the ability of the educator to work without punishment. Sukhomlinsky's opinions and practice may help in the research of the current requirements of preschool education.

INTRODUCTION
The research of pedagogic theories and the works of famous pedagogues play an important role in the scientific analysis of pedagogic problems, as well as in the evolution of pedagogic science and practical education.

Nowadays, modern pedagogues-scientists of the world look into the case of creating the model of the holistic school of the 21st century, based on the “rebirth” of diachronic ideas of the past (Röder et al. 1990). One of the basic principles in education today advocates the humanistic approach to education, the precedence of universal human values, the significance of human life and health, and the promotion of the free development of personality. Children should be educated and raised in a spirit respecting human rights, care of the environment, love for one's home country and family. The greatest emphasis is placed on new tendencies such as "free personality's determination", “the child's self realization”, “adaptability of education to the specific features of a child’s development". Teaching techniques are directed towards developing a child’s personality and individual capacities. Children and their families are to have greater educational choice of alternatives in programmes and institutions. The most important factor is that education should be differentiated and individualized so that children’s development matches their interests and abilities.

The goals of education are rooted in a child-centered pedagogy concerned with personal development. The new child-centered education is activity-based and emphasizes the need to adapt teaching to individual needs and abilities, to promote independent learning, and to develop creativity (See: Papadopoulou 1997, 33–35).
The well-known educator Vasili Sukhomlinsky, whose work each year attracts more and more the interest of the scientific field of Pedagogy, contributed a lot to the humanitarian pedagogical beliefs of the 20th century. His system, not only enriched the pedagogic science, contributed to the theory and the practice of education, but it also brought to light the theoretical sources of his humanism, presenting the philosophical and cosmopolitical bases of his pedagogic ideas. “When we speak of the case of Sukhomlinsky, – the known Greek educator-scientist Ch. Frankos underlines, – we do not speak anymore about a technique, a system, a method, or a new pedagogic direction but we speak of all that together and at the same time about a new direction that renews education with a new form of humanism” (Frankos 1986, 52).

A rich bibliography on the life and the pedagogic activity of Sukhomlinsky is easily available. Certain sides of his pedagogic system are examined in some doctoral theses (L. Abpamova, V. Vasilenko, M. Lefkofsky, B. Loskutof, R. Pozinkevich, L. Sidnef). The pedagogic heritage of Sukhomlinsky is studied widely in many countries (E. Gunter, P. Lazarova, A. Levin, W. Grosch, R. Schtainik). The World Union of Pedagogues decided to study the ideas of Sukhomlinsky, its founder being Prof. Ch. Frankos. A scientific laboratory was created to examine the pedagogic ideas of Sukhomlinsky in the University of Marburg (Germany) as well.

Already known all over the world, Sukhomlinsky worked for almost thirty years as the director of a school in the village Pavlish of the Ukraine. In these thirty years he wrote more than 40 books and he published more than a 100 articles. His work is translated into 40 languages. And this is not accidental. Sukhomlinsky achieved to find new ways of teaching. He saw the intellectual world of a child in a different way. The monographs of Sukhomlinsky “I’m giving my heart to the children”, “Bringing up a citizen”, “The school of Pavlish”, “Hundred pieces of advice to a schoolteacher”, became known worldwide.

Sukhomlinsky was born on 28 September 1918 in the Ukraine. He graduated from the Pedagogic University of Poltava where the acclaimed educator, Anton Makarenko also studied. In 1948 he became director of the school of Pavlish, where he had been working for 22 years making known to the whole world the School of Sukhomlinsky.

The pedagogic ideas of Sukhomlinsky became widely accepted in the decade of the fifties. From 1950 on, he began to publish his articles, not only in the local press but also in the newspapers and in the pedagogic magazines in the USSR and Eastern Europe. In 1955 the schoolteacher Sukhomlinsky, successfully presents in the University of Kiev his doctoral thesis on the subject “The director of school as organizer and instructor of education”. In one of his first monographs, “The intellectual world of a pupil”, using a great number of scientific facts and having in his disposal a lot of examples, he examined the course of the intellectual, moral and aesthetic development of a pupil.

Sukhomlinsky reaches the zenith of his pedagogic creation in the decade of the sixties, when with particular force he expressed his brilliant pedagogic talent, to be exact, the talent of an educator-scientist and an educator-writer. In this period he wrote his best monographs, articles and books for children. His monograph “I’m giving my heart to the children” was published for the first time in 1969 and six publications followed. It was translated into 15 foreign languages and received positive criticism.

Sukhomlinsky died on 2 September 1970. His death did not put an end to his creative achievements, to his services to the school itself, to schoolteachers, and Pedagogy. The monographs of Sukhomlinsky that were published after his death, such as: “A Discussion with the Young Director of School”, “The Pedagogy for Parents”, “Problems of Education
of a Fully Developed Person”, “Letters to My Son” deserve our great esteem. The humanitarian direction of his books, as well as that of his entire pedagogic heritage, is poignantly formulated in the phrase “the century of Mathematics”... It may be a good expression, but it does not reflect the essence of our times. The world enters the century of the Person. We should think, now more than ever, what indeed we put in the soul of a child” (Sukhomlinsky 1980a, 123–124).

HUMANISM – NOT PUNISHMENT

The main methodological principle of the pedagogic system of Sukhomlinsky is that only persons that did not know punishment while themselves children could build the humanitarian society. “As long as I live”, he wrote, “I’ll implement in my school the truth in which I deeply believe: it’s possible to bring up a person only by doing what’s good for him/her” (Sukhomlinsky 1980b, 92). In his monographs he asserted that the fear of punishment oppresses psychologically the child, weakens all its good attributes, removes it from its schoolteacher and its parents’ path, helps in the cultivation of lies. Punishments lead to the creation of animosity, sentimental callousness, cruelty and brutality. Sukhomlinsky was absolutely sure that the right education should not include punishment tactics.

The greatest evil that punishment brings out into a child, in Sukhomlinsky’s opinion, is not that the punishment offends the child’s dignity but that a child, who is punished, does not any longer make efforts to improve intellectually and morally. Taking Dostoevsky’s philosophical thought a bit further, that punishment is released from a person’s shame, Sukhomlinsky wrote: “In situations where everything is based on punishment, there’s no self-activity and without self-activity the “right education” is excluded generally. It is excluded because punishment is released from the compunctions of conscience and conscience is the main engine of education” (Sukhomlinsky 1980c, 366).

The humanism of the pedagogic system of Sukhomlinsky is expressed first of all in the thesis where the central objective of his Pedagogy is the personality of a child, the most lively and intense interest for a child, the development of all its abilities and faculties. The pedagogic work of Sukhomlinsky and his practical applications are the most persuasive proof of his stand. The main idea of his heritage is that without faith in the possibilities of a child, all the methods and all the approaches of teaching are useless. In his practice he supported the need of the study of the esoteric world of the child and the ways of his/her behavior.

Sukhomlinsky’s main advice is to search the solution of problems with regard to each specific child, trying to find the possible areas of his/her development and his/her unique characteristics. He considered that we should educate the child having in mind his/her dynamics and his/her development and he asked from the educators to know the causes of behavior of the child, the difficulties that prevent the development of the child in learning.

Sukhomlinsky believed that in each child there are hidden wishes for virtue, for just doing good to all. He always cultivated the encouragement of a child to become more intelligent and good-hearted, to help other people, to appreciate the personality of others. The idea of Sukhomlinsky for the full development of a child and the liberation of all his intellectual forces is presented today as the cornerstone in the Pedagogy of collaboration, in the center of which there are the joint activities of a teacher and his/her pupils, the reciprocal confidence and politeness, the incentive for the steady creative and moral development of a child.

The rich pedagogic experience gave to Sukhomlinsky the possibility to conclude that the pedagogic art of a teacher includes the faculty to direct the pedagogical process based not
on the past of a child’s actions, faculties that may be altered, but to see how the child is developing, to direct this development to a positive direction and to eliminate any negative impact. The best way to learn the characteristics of a child is through observation in his/her natural surroundings. Consulting the new teachers, Sukhomlinsky said: “You observe how the two worlds interact – the world of the environment and the esoteric intellectual world of a child. Observe how the child is thinking, what it is feeling, with what a great difficulty thoughts are processed in his/ her brain. Learn to read the thinner movements of its thought, its feelings, its ordeals in each movement of a child and particularly, in his eyes” (Sukhomlinsky 1980c, 218).

The basic care of a teacher, in the opinion of Sukhomlinsky, should be the care for the health of a child. Without a good knowledge of the condition of the child’s health it’s impossible to organize successfully the educational process, because the intellectual life of a child, its moral standing, the faith in its own forces depends on the optimism and the liveliness of a child. The continuous study of an intellectual world of a child and the sensitive collaboration with it, along with the pedagogic art of teachers and the pedagogic education of parents, are the essential conditions for the strengthening of the health of a child.

In order to know the child well, Sukhomlinsky underlined, “a teacher should learn not only the individual peculiarities of each age, but also the conditions of life in the family, the state of health of a child, as well as study its thoughts, its feelings, its objectives. What does the child live with, what makes him/her tick and what distresses him/her, where it finds joy or sadness, how it behaves with the other people, how the environment influences its soul – all these circumstances find reflection in the deeply individual personal ordeals, thoughts, objectives, the needs and the action of a child.

A teacher needs a lot of wisdom and sincerity in order to distinguish in each child its personality, to feel glad observing the permanent development of it and not to find continuously the errors in the behavior of a child. This optimism is the substance of pedagogic art. Nothing can elevate the personality of a teacher more than this joy of admission of his/her own necessity for the children, the intellectual and pneumatic connection with them. The pedagogic art, Sukhomlinsky believes, is such that it can help a teacher open up to each child, even to the most mediocre, to a difficult child with weak intellectual development, the possibilities to reach the top of its abilities, to express its thoughts, to distinguish itself, to derive strength from the source of human dignity. In other words, between a child and a teacher there should exist the “pneumatic communication”, based on the interconnection, the mutual understanding, the deep belief in each other.

A great influence in the formation of the pedagogical ideology of Sukhomlinsky has had a known Polish educator and Doctor Janusz Korczak. His books “How to love a child” (1919), “When I will be again a small boy” (1925), were known to Sukhomlinsky before the World War II. Korczak was killed in the crematories by the Germans in August 1942 with the Jewish children of the Orphanage of Warsaw. He could have saved his life, as it had been suggested by his friends, but Korczak answered that the person should really stand by what he believes in. He held the hands of children the last moments before his martyr’s death. His duty towards the children was carried out up to the end of his life, offering an entire life to a moral cause he fought for. Korczak’s action became an example of human dignity, when Sukhomlinsky heard after the war. “The life of Janusz Korczak”, he wrote in his book: this feat of exceptional moral force and chastity became for me an inspiration. I understood: in order to be a good educator I should give my heart to children” (Sukhomlinsky 1980a, 15) It wasn’t easy to do. Just like Makarenko (1888–1939), Sukhomlinsky had been fighting hard against the representatives of authoritarian pedagogy that oppressed the child. Answering to one of his critics Sukhomlinsky wrote: “I’m bewildered with the opinion of my critic for the
punishment at school, that it is essential, inevitable in the system of education... It is not a creature of my imagination that our own children should be brought up only with goodness, with kindness, without punishments. And if it’s impossible to do it in a massive scale, in all schools, this does not mean that education without punishments is impossible to be applied, but it means that most schoolteachers cannot perform their duty without punishments “ (Sukhomlinsky 1980b, 530).

The success education without punishment depends greatly on the prestige of a teacher. In order to have real prestige the teacher should be a cultured person, fully-developed personality, having a great circle of interests. He/she should be an example for the children in keeping promises, in the exacting, in a constant way of behavior, in self-possession. “The prestige of an educator, Sukhomlinsky wrote, is the work of his/her mind and his soul, the faculty to instill deep respect in his/her pupils and his/her ideals, his/her principles, his/her convictions. This prestige becomes a dominant factor in education when the educator’s word and behavior coexist harmoniously. A prestigious educator’s activity becomes an example for the children” (Sukhomlinsky 1979a, 442).

Of great scientific importance are the thoughts of Sukhomlinsky on the culture of language. The educator should have the dexterity to find the suitable word and to give the suitable sentimental nuance to it. “The language of a schoolteacher is an irreplaceable tool of influence above the soul of a child”, Sukhomlinsky wrote. – “The art of education imports first of all the way you speak, you address to the heart of a person. I am sure that most conflicts that often culminate occur due to the educator’s disability to speak with a pupil” (Sukhomlinsky 1980b, 134).

LEARNING WITH JOY

The humanitarian essence of Sukhomlinsky’s pedagogic has also found its application in his didactics. He underlines the decisive role of learning in the preschool age and he believes that the learning should become cute work that would contribute decisively in the rounded development of a child. The point he emphasizes is that children should learn through interest and joy. It is not accidental that one chapter of his book has the title “Give to the child the joy of mental work, the joy of success in the learning”. Sukhomlinsky writes that in order for the children to have an interest for learning, it is not necessary for each course to become amusing and a teacher to invent something new and exceptional all the time. The secret for the interest in learning is not found in amusement he underlines, but it is hidden in the successes of children, in their intellectual elevation, the movement, the surpassing of difficulties. If the child yesterday did not understand and today it got it, yesterday it could not do something and today it learned to do it, such learning brings joy.

Sukhomlinsky considered that in order for the children to learn successfully it’s necessary for them to obtain certain dexterities and habits. The brain of a child should learn to think, to remember, to repeat. When a child has learned to learn, it does its work with interest and joy, it will seek knowledge. The long-lasting observations convinced Sukhomlinsky that children delay in their learning, because they do not have the dexterities to work rightly. In order for the child to learn with enthusiasm, to develop and strengthen continuously its mind, we should explain to it some certain basic rules, for example, what precisely from the school material a child should keep in memory, what should be comprehended well, what from that knowledge will be used in its future learning and what from that knowledge could simply serve as reservoir of knowledge or simply as an idea. Thus for the preschool age the basic activities in the learning process are the following:
• dexterity to observe the phenomena of the environment
• dexterity to think, to compare, to reproduce, to point out the incomprehensible, to wonder
• exerity to express what it sees, what it observes, what it makes.

As one of the basic factors of development of creativity in learning, Sukhomlinsky considered the use of moral motives. In the book “I’m giving my heart to children”, he underlines the moral direction of learning, the big pedagogic role that it plays in education: “One of the important pedagogic aims in the course of conquest of knowledge is each child to conceive the human dignity, the feeling of pride” (Sukhomlinsky 1980a, 174). Such moral motives of learning are continuously supported and they are prompted from a teacher so that the child can find a joint cognitive prospect, something that contributes to the achievement of success in learning.

Sukhomlinsky contributed a lot to teaching, importing to the children the “courses of thought in nature”, as he repeatedly said. He named such courses “travels in the source of live thought”. During those lessons the children learned not only to observe nature but also to think, to realize the relations, to describe the objects, the phenomena, so as to be able to connect the new knowledge with the knowledge that they had already had. Nature, Sukhomlinsky wrote, is the source of thought of a child, and it is very important for the child’s intellectual growth to come into contact with “this school”. Certain negative characteristics of a child, such as carelessness, inability to concentrate and to work autonomously, the weakness in finding solutions to analytical problems, were regarded by Sukhomlinsky as the result of a bad timing between the source of thought and nature, since they were not approached at the child’s appropriate age.

Sukhomlinsky was trying hard so that before the child opens the book and reads its first word, it should know the “book of nature”. Because only in nature the purest and most lively thoughts are usually born; only in nature does the child think visually. That means that hearing for example, the narration of a schoolteacher for the travels of a drop of water a child is imaging also the silver waves of the morning fog and the black clouds and the thunders of lightning and the spring rain. The more luminous these pictures are in the imagination of a child, the more deeply it understands the laws of nature.

Sukhomlinsky warned the schoolteachers that if the child is isolated from nature, if it hears the word without seeing the correlation with the corresponding pictures, his/her cells will tire very fast, the child might not execute the exercises that are assigned by the schoolteacher and a holdup of the education process will begin. “For this reason the thought of children should be developed, the mental capacities of a child must be strengthened in nature. This is one of the requirements of a natural growth of children’s organism. For this reason, each trip into the nature is a lesson of thought, a lesson for the development of the intellect” (Sukhomlinsky 1980a, 35).

Applying these ideas, Sukhomlinsky systematically twice per week took his pupils to the vineyards, to the green meadows, to the fields, to the river, to the tomb that was near the village. In these lessons he tried not only to speak himself, but also to hear the children, to give them the possibility to keep silent in nature, to observe it, to feel it, to understand what they are observing and hearing, to see, to touch. The dexterity of a teacher to give to a child the possibility of thinking, Sukhomlinsky underlines, is one of the best qualifications of a teacher.

Sukhomlinsky paying great attention to the development the child’s thought in nature, tried to determine the objects for observation, the natural phenomena and so on. He composed “the book of nature”, with 300 pages, with each one having its own title, for
example: “Live and inanimate”, “Inanimate is connected with live”, “The sun is the source of life”, “The animals and the plants”, “The travels of a drop of water”, “Nature is waking up”, “Nature awaits winter”, “A green leaf is the deposit of helium”, etc.

In these lessons a child thinks visually, with color and sounds. The visual thought, Sukhomlinsky generalizes, is an important and essential stage in the development of intelligence. Thanks to the experienced multistage relations with the objects and the phenomena of the environment, the thought of a child continuously is developed and strengthened.

No one doubts that the fairy tale plays a significant role in the development of a child. Sukhomlinsky himself wrote fairy tales. The fairy tales and his short stories, written in simple, clean, juicy language, have a deep moral content, enchanting sincerity, aesthetic emotion. He advised to the educators to learn to say fairy tales, because a fairy tale inspires the mind of a child with the beauty of language and thought. “The fairy tale constitutes joy of thought”, Sukhomlinsky wrote. “Creating a fairy tale the child strengthens his faculty for creative thought and out of this the feeling of its dignity” (Sukhomlinsky 1979a, 549).

The fairy tale constitutes a type of energetic creativity, that fascinates all the sides of the intellectual life of a child, his/her mind, the feelings, the imagination, his/her will. Naturally, the child knows very well that neither sorceress nor princesses whose kiss transforms frogs exist. Simply, it incarnates in these heroes his/her understanding for good and evil, his/her own perception of good and evil. The fairy tale is tied up with beauty, and it helps not only in the development of thought, but also in the development of the child’s aesthetics, without which the magnanimity and the sensitivity of the heart do not exist. Thanks to the fairy tale, the child is learning the world not only with its mind but also with its heart. The fairy tale, the game, the imagination, constitute a vivifying source of thought of a child, polite feelings and objectives. Through the fairy tale the word with its thin nuances enters the conscience of the child and becomes a ball of intellectual life for the child, a means of expression of thoughts and feelings. The fairy tale is also a very important means for the cultivation of sentiment, and genuine patriotism. The hero of the fairy tale transports in the heart and in the mind of the child his perceptions for life, his/her ideals and objectives. The fairy tale shapes the love to the homeland, because the fairy tale itself is the creation of the masses, their spirit, the luxury of popular culture. Sukhomlinsky gave particular attention to the aesthetic character of space where the fairy tale was set. For example, the fairy tale about the princess who kissed the frog was narrated in the corner of the class trying to resemble the “thicket” where the story takes place.

THE PEDAGOGICAL CULTURE OF AN EDUCATOR

In the pedagogic experiment of Sukhomlinsky, the teacher plays the leading role in the organization of all educational work. The profession of an educator, Sukhomlinsky stressed, is anthropognosia, that’s why we never stop the infiltration in the difficult intellectual world of a child. The well-known rule of Sukhomlinsky to discover always in a person something new, to admire this new aspect, to see the person in his growth – is one of the main principles that characterize the destination of a pedagogic vocation.

In the work of Sukhomlinsky we find the basic characteristics that a good educator should have:

- love for children
- sincerity and interest for children. The incurious educator will never have real prestige.

“Education is the union of the intellectual life of a schoolteacher and that of the pupil’s”, Sukhomlinsky wrote, “it’s a union of the ideals, the objectives, as well as of
interests, thoughts and emotions’ (Sukhomlinsky 1980b, 51)

- intellectual sensitivity that helps the schoolteacher to feel the situation a child might be in, its disposition, “the leaps of the heart of a child”
- good intention in his relations with the children
- deep estimate of the personality of a child.

Sensitivity in the character of an educator is an essential constitutive element, that gives him/her the possibility of conceiving the disposition of a child, in time to help those children that need his/her help. Sukhomlinsky urged the new teachers not to accept “the evil” that might be obvious in the child’s behavior. The heart of a child, that understands the evil of the schoolteacher, becomes deaf and dumb. The malicious educator sees bad intention where there is only the usual children’s misbehaving. The lack of tolerance to the children’s frailties makes the educator an indifferent supervisor, the children hate him/her and try to “get back at him/her” in the same way, with other words they try to make his/her existence in the class rather difficult.

Good intentions should be the bases of the relations between a teacher and the children. The well-disposed educator, Sukhomlinsky believed, is behaving towards a pupil as if he/she were his/her own child. Only in this case the heart of a schoolteacher will dictate to him/her how to react, when a child does a mistake (fault). The child’s faith in the sincerity and in the kindness of an educator is a determining factor. In this case a child is also sincere towards the educator and his/her soul will correspond to the word of an educator. For this reason an educator should penetrate in the world of children’s thoughts and feelings, understand the language of the children’s age group, stay in a way a child himself/herself.

In the study of a child’s personality, Sukhomlinsky advised the educators to analyze carefully the individual particularities of the child. He supported that each child has besides the formal, general characteristics, some peculiar, unique individual qualities. In this sense, each one is a unique world that the educator should discover only with the help of particular pedagogic “keys”. Passing onto the child knowledge is the main point, where the theory and practice of pedagogy meet, where all the threads of pedagogical approaches assemble.

**CONCLUSION**

Concluding we can say that the essence of pedagogic activity for Sukhomlinsky is the creation of school where the children might live and learn with joy. Such “a school of joy” Sukhomlinsky tried to set up in Pavlish. He created an entire new perception of education, according to which the work and the joy of a child constitute an important and essential motive of formation of the aesthetic and moral principles of a child.

For the application of the humanitarian pedagogic ideas of Sukhomlinsky in the kindergarten, the following characteristics should be included:

- willingness of a teacher to work without punishments
- education on the bases of a deep faith in the child
- a need of learning of the inner world of a child and supporting it in his positive characteristics
- the upgrading of the role of nature in the education of children of preschool age.

Finishing, we can point out that as far as Pedagogy is concerned, the 21st century is a century of searching concrete theoretical foundations and new pedagogic approaches for long-standing practices. In these different tendencies and directions of pedagogic thought in the 21st century, we should report a particular common characteristic that connects all these pedagogic theories: the recognition that the child’s existence is holy. Undeniably our
century places more importance to the respect of the personality of the child, the development of its intellectual forces, the attention to its inner world, the release of his natural faculties.

The offer of Sukhomlinsky in the pedagogical field focuses in the humanitarian essence of Pedagogy, stressing the optimistic confrontation of a child, the confidence and respect for a child, the search of "intellectual communication" between the child and the teacher, which is based on interconnection, mutual understanding, the dexterity of the educator to know the language of children's age group. Sukhomlinsky's opinions and points of view correspond to the current requirements of preschool education.

REFERENCES

