

THE PECULIARITIES OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN UPBRINGING IN JAPAN

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Abstract: The paper demonstrates some peculiarities of Japanese preschool children upbringing at the present time and investigates some forms of children education which have a significant influence on the development of some character features of Japanese people and mentality as a whole.

Key words: system of education, preschool age, child's upbringing, kindergarten, Japanese national character.

In the research literature the period of childhood is defined as a complex social phenomenon, which is a structural element of the society interacting both with the society as a whole and its other elements, performing certain functions. Based on this position, childhood is a complex of objects, events, processes, social institutions and social practices as regards children which is formed and supported by the society. Therefore, the main social function of childhood is the initial formation of some definite abilities, the development of child's character and personality and preparation for entry into adulthood.

In this case the nature and content of childhood are affected by specific ethno-cultural and socio-economic features of the society in which a child grows and, above all, the system of public education that has developed historically (Носко, 2004). It is this system that provides an adoption of ethical standards and norms, cultural traditions, certain abilities, appropriate to the requirements of this society.

The insight of Japanese culture peculiarities, the perception of many historical, social, cultural, political and other realities seem to be difficult without a characteristic and deep understanding the Japanese national character, the formation of which is determined by the features of the upbringing system in the country at certain stages of life. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to consider the main peculiarities and specifics of educational system of preschool age children in Japan.

The upbringing process is considered to be the development of a growing person as a unique human identity, ensuring his growth and improving moral and creative forces. It should be noted that it is the theory of early socialization of the individual that is the basis of the modern concept of Japanese preschool education. The human behavior patterns are formed in childhood, and some personality traits which are laid in preschool institutes make the culture of the Japanese society as a whole (Филатова, 2008). According to psychologists, a person gains 70% of knowledge up to seven years old and only 30% - for the rest of the life. So it becomes obvious why so much attention is paid to preschool education in the Japanese society (Степанишина, 2006).

The Japanese system of upbringing children allows a child to do everything what he wants up to about five or six years old. The paradox of such education is that law-abiding citizens grow up from children, who were allowed virtually to do everything – for instance, to make noise, scream, disturb adults, damage things, fight and be naughty. Nobody forbids a child to do this, nobody punishes him, and no one is surprised with this kind of behavior. A Japanese woman will just look on the child with disfavor and say: "It hurts me", "It is dangerous" or "It is hot"; that is the child's behavior is controlled mainly by the influence on his feelings. A child needs to understand what is right and what is not from his own experience, rather than through the pangs and penalties (Парамонова, 2010). In this way, the most important thing to a child is the awareness of correct behavior patterns in the society from his own experience.

However, by the age of six a child is needed to adapt to different prohibitions and regulations in the society, learn how to behave in a particular situation. Not obeying or behaving differently is

considered as an impossible thing because of fear of “loss of the face” and being out of the group. Therefore, for the adoption of such principles of the society children are sent to preschool institutions, where a further socialization occurs and basic communication skills with coevals are developed (Парамонова, 2010).

Kindergartens and nursery schools where children spend most of their time have a significant influence on forming their character. In this period the fundamental principles necessary for the existence in Japanese society are adopted – for example, the principles of collectivism and of deeply aesthetic perception of the world, of social harmony or respect for the senior people, courtesy in behavior and etc.

The basic unit of Japanese society is a group, and a person is a member of various groups throughout his life, so the idea of belonging to the collective, designed in order to form a group consciousness, is almost central in the child lifestyle and in the upbringing process of Japanese (Корецкая, 2003). He is always told: “You have to be like everyone”, “Look, everyone listens carefully to the teacher at lessons”, “Everyone helps the teacher in his work”, etc. In this way there is no any violence on a person - such teaching is easily perceived by Japanese due to their collective psychology.

One of the important tools of such education is the choral singing which helps to develop a sense of unity with the team as it is not accepted in Japan to allocate one child from the group. Thus, in order to punish the naughty one, a teacher, for example, suggests him singing not in the choir but alone, and the fear of separation out of joint actions with other children is the worst punishment for this child because little Japanese cannot live without the collective (Бантин, 1999). It is not acceptable to compare abilities of different children: a mentor would never say that a child draws well, but is bad at running, and parents may never know that the child counts badly but is the best at reading. However, the impact of group consciousness often leads to inability to think for oneself. The idea of conformance to the same standard is laid in the children’s minds so firmly, that speaking their mind they can become a standing jest for other children (Парамонова, 2010).

Also in kindergartens during the process of communication children learn to analyze their conflicts happening during numerous games. Each child is prescribed to try to avoid the rivalry because the victory of the one can lead to a “loss of the face” of the other. Therefore, according to Japanese, the best solution of conflicts is a compromise (Бантин, 1999), that is, the conflict-interaction skills are formed in the Japanese society from the early age (Нурутдинова, 2006). However, according to Masaru Ibuka, “... even quarrels are an important element of interpersonal relationships as they develop a personal initiative, therefore to intervene in children’s quarrels means to keep down the instinct of living in a group” (Макару, 1991).

Another side of Japanese education is the development of aesthetic perception of the world and following the rituals and traditional way of the society. Teaching calligraphy occupies one of the important places in such education. In kindergartens children are not only taught how to write Japanese hieroglyphs but they also learn to write them beautifully and accurately, delving into the picture which is the basis of a certain symbol. Calligraphy produces useful skills to a child – the confidence in writing a stroke, precise drawing, elegant lines, etc., and these techniques of calligraphy help to develop art drawing principles and nurture a discriminating aesthetic taste, which is typical for each Japanese person. In this way the principles of creative thinking and artistic expression are formed among Japanese children (Киященко, 1998).

Much attention is paid to different applied arts: applications, drawing, modeling, embroidery, origami, etc. which develop a motility of fingers needed for Japanese writing. Also a crucial moment of aesthetic education of children is a kind of a game, which is usually built as a process of reproduction traits of the surrounding nature with the help of drawings, for instance, with crayons. Such a game of the nature observation and then displaying it helps to form creative behavior skills, to educate an artistic taste and develop a sense of color, shape, etc. (Матвеева, 2003).

It should be mentioned that some celebrations specially dedicated to children, are held in Japan annually. They create a sense of involvement into national customs and traditions of their country (e.g. Hinamatsuri, Kodomo - no hi, Sitigosan). Girls, often for the first time, are dressed up in a kimono, and boys are donned with “montsuki” (a short kimono with a family emblem) and “hakama” (wide trousers – a part of the official Japanese costume), and children with their parents go to the temple to take part in a vigil. Undoubtedly, these holidays are an important element of emotional familiarization

of children with social life, with cultural traditions of the whole nation, as well as with both the beauty and the traditional ritual (Нурутдинова, 2007).

Thereby, it can be concluded that the system of pre-school upbringing in Japan in addition to the physical and spiritual development is designed to form and develop the basic skills of behavior, communication, aesthetic perception of the world, lay the principles of the collectivist values of Japanese society in children. Primary education in Japan creates the necessary concept of human community, brings up a man who knows how to work in a team, who distinctly fulfills all requirements without disturbing the people around him. It forms a mass group psychology and preferences, which are not always conducive to the development of creative abilities of a child, and lead to conformism and leveling of individuality typical for Japanese national character.

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