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## **FRÖBEL'S BOOK „THE EDUCATION OF MAN“ AND ITS PEDAGOGICAL LEGACY**

### **DZIEŁO FRIEDRICHA FRÖBELA „EDUKACJA CZŁOWIEKA” I JEGO DZIEDZICTWO PEDAGOGICZNE**

#### **Abstract**

*The study deals with the persistent pedagogical legacy of the German classical pedagogue Friedrich Fröbel, which was preserved in the form of a work entitled “The Education of Man”, representing the congruence of pedagogy and psychology for the strategic education of children. It assesses the anchoring of Fröbel's principles oriented to education and their persisting form. It identifies gnomic ideas that are relevant to the preschool and elementary pedagogy and provide high-quality, valuable advice and suggestions for today's effective, systematic, purposeful education and upbringing of children of preschool and early school-age. It documents the continuity of development of his inspiring ideas with which Fröbel stimulated the professional public and thus contributed to the development of modern pedagogical and psychological thinking.*

**Keywords:** *Education, Friedrich Fröbel, The Education of Man, Upbringing*

#### **Streszczenie**

*Dane badane dotyczy długotrwałego dziedzictwa pedagogicznego niemieckiego pedagoga klasycznego Friedricha Fröbela, które przetrwało w postaci pracy „Menschenerziehung”, „Edukacja człowieka”, które reprezentuje zgodność pedagogiki i psychologii dla edukacji strategicznej dzieci. Zostało ocenione zakorzenienie zasad edukacji Fröbela i ich trwały charakter. Zostały przeanalizowane ludowe idee dotyczące pedagogiki przedszkolnej i wczesnoszkolnej, które stanowiły cenne, wysokiej jakości porady dla współcz-*

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nej efektywnej, systematycznej i celowej edukacji i wychowania dzieci w wieku przedszkolnych i wczesnoszkolnym. W studium została udokumentowana ciągłość rozwoju jego inspirujących idei, dzięki Fröbel zrobił duży wkład w rozwój współczesnej myśli pedagogicznej i psychologicznej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Edukacja, Friedrich Fröbel, Edukacja człowieka, wychowanie

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### **Statement of the problem in general outlook and its connection with important scientific and practical tasks.**

Worldwide known Friedrich Fröbel, considered one of the greatest teachers and educators, has dedicated his entire life to working with the little ones. The representative of German classical pedagogy and the founder of pre-school institutionalized education was born on 21st April 1782 in the village of Oberweißbach. He had a difficult childhood, but as Quick (Quick R.H., 1897) mentions in his publication, it was reminiscences of his own hardships that were able to encourage him to take up educational work all his life. The depressing memories of his early childhood, marked by a feeling of sadness or abandonment, resulted in the writing of a deeply felt work with an understanding for the souls of the little ones. In Weston's (Weston P., 2000) words, these experiences have become indescribably beneficial for him and for those who still strive to provide children with a happy, joyful childhood.

Based on Harris's (Harris in Hughes J.L., 1897) claim that only those, who read Fröbel's work, are constantly growing in the consciousness and power of higher achievements and goals, we highlight the fact that the work, which is the platform of his pedagogical thinking and the pinnacle of creative philosophical work in his life, has not yet been the subject of in-depth research. In congruence with the above-mentioned, the main goal of the study is "to indicate the theoretical basis of Friedrich Fröbel's pedagogical system by analysing the work *The Education of Man*" and to make visible the extent to which his educational ideas are relevant to modern education.

When plotting the study, we used the historical-literary method, we used the direct method to find out information from the original historical source and we used the method of analysis to interpret them. We relied on fundamental information given in the historical source, i.e. work *The Education of Man*.

### **Analysis of latest research where the solution of the problem was initiated.**

In line with the already illustrated, we underline that Fröbel's only work creating a platform for his pedagogical thinking has not been the subject of in-depth research in our conditions, despite numerous superlatives, but abroad the importance and asset of this issue is realized by members of *The Froebel Trust* to deepen the understanding of the theoretical basis of Fröbel's pedagogical principles and verify their effectiveness. Members of *IFS*, [The International Froebel Society], who, among other activities, have been organizing conferences since 2004 on the topicality and penetration of Fröbel's ideas for

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pedagogy as a science and practice, are also convinced of the relevance of the issue. A key guide that responds to the need to reorganize the issue in congruence with the current progress of the subject and synthesize a unique and valuable body of literature, research, case studies to define the specific features of Fröbel's education is a monograph by T. Bruce, P. Elfer, S. Powell, L. Wertha (2018) - *The Routledge International Handbook of Froebel and Early Childhood Practice: Re-articulating Research and Policy*.

### **Aims of paper. Methods**

Corporate with the intention illustrated above, we determined the aim of the study, which was to interpret Fröbel's pedagogical-philosophical ideas in the context of preschool and elementary pedagogy. The eminent method in our historical-scientific study is the direct method, through which we obtained facts from the original source. We also used the literary-historical method to obtain and process data, the explanation of older phenomena with the help of new ones was enabled by the use of a progressive method, and last but not least, we retrospectively clarified the sequence of events from youngest to oldest. We used a qualitative method, an analysis method, to process the data, thorough interpretation and publication of the research results. During the elaboration of the study, the theoretical basis was provided by literary sources published in our country and abroad. The primary source for us was Fröbel's work *Education of Man*. Secondary sources related to Fröbel's pedagogical-philosophical views for us were works by E. Opravilová, V. Štverák, J. L. Hughes, P. Weston, V. C. Lascarides, B. F. Hinitz, M. Dahl, S. Gwoździewicz. In conclusion, we note that the information obtained was correctly analyzed, detailed and critically analyzed to interpret and draw conclusions.

### **Exposition of main material of research with complete substantiation of obtained scientific results. Discussion**

#### **The Education of Man**

In 1817, Fröbel founded his own "General German Educational Institute" in Keilhau. He made use of long-time experiences gained during his own childhood, observation of himself, nature, the surrounding world, his own study, educational activities, his stay in the "Mecca of the world" – as he called teacher's institute of Pestalozzi – and applied all these things in his pedagogical activities. The period in Keilhau represents the peak years of Fröbel's life. Opravilová and Štverák (Opravilová E., Štverák V., 1982) regard this period as a unique stage of his creative and fruitful work. In his pedagogical activities and the upbringing and education of children, he focused on the development of human faculties on three levels: strength; perception; thinking. He focused his methodology on education, respecting didactic principles "from simple to complex, from known to unknown, from visible to invisible, from opinion to concept".

In addition to the success of his institute and the methodology of work, the year 1826 became more fundamental and ground-breaking in his life, because in this year he finished his key work *The Education of Man* /in German *Die Menscheneziehung*/ that is based on his premise of a versatile, general education and cultivation of people who "stand with their feet on the earth of God and are rooted in nature, which head reaches up to heaven" (Watson B.M., 1997). At the time when the work was published, it fell into the hands of educated people only, or rather to those, who were interested in the topic of

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education and upbringing of children of preschool and early school-age. It is interesting that the work, as a philosophical presentation of the principles and methods applied in the methodology of work in Keilhau, is presented with the commonly used, but also already abbreviated title “The Education of Man”. Initially, this work had a longer name: “On Education of Man, Namely on Art of Educating, Tutoring and Teaching, Carried Out at the General German Educational Institute in Keilhau, Prepared by the Founder, Builder and Representative of the Institute, Friedrich W. A. Fröbel. The first volume.” The original title page of this Fröbel’s work also included a clause: “Until boyhood – the beginning of youth”. Fröbel intended to write another sequel to his work, but this never happened (Michelis E., Moore H.K., 1889, p. 118).

### **Pedagogical ideas of Friedrich Fröbel**

Fröbel’s life dates back to the period of the great German philosophical movement of the classical-idealist era. His year of birth, as Hughes (Hughes J.L., 1897) notes, coincides very closely with the publication of I. Kant’s book – Critique of Pure Reason, which laid a new foundation for philosophy. He was followed by three other philosophers, J. G. Fichte, F. W. J. Schelling, and G. W. F. Hegel, who developed his ideas. In the meantime, Fröbel was also inspired by this continuity of mutual suggestion and the spread of questions concerning freedom, immortality and the Divine Being. In his work, he formulated philosophical-pedagogical views, in which he presented his thoughts on the quintessence and irreplaceability of early childhood education, which were based on his idealistic view “that the Eternal Law lives and rules in all things”. From God as the essence of all creation, he deduced the basis of education, which accompanies the child through the various stages of his development to the set goal, i.e. to have a life in God (Fröbel F., 1885, p. 1). Fröbel developed a pedagogical theory based only on the philosophy of God, nature and man. In this theory, he considers the strategic education of the child to be the fundamental and primary goal, so that the child “could become able – with his pure, intact and holy life – to get as close as possible to a perfect Father living in heaven” (Bađuriková Z., 2015/2016, p. 13). The purpose of upbringing and education was to encourage and guide man as a conscious, thinking and perceiving being in such a way, so he can become – through his own choices – a pure and perfect embodiment of that divine internal law. The upbringing and education should help him in this way and to show him the significance of achieving this goal (Fröbel F., 1885).

As the highest goal of man and at the same time the highest act of self-determination, he regarded a finding wisdom. Therefore, he considered as the unique mission of those who have the privilege to educate and teach, consciously and freely lead themselves and others to self-determination. It is a double wisdom that appeared at the same time as the first man appeared on the earth. “The divine that dwells in man and in his essence has and must be developed by education, so that man may be led to a free, conscious life... so that he may be exalted to the free manifestation of all the divine that works in him.”(Fröbel F., 1885). At the same time, he also pointed out one fundamental need of those, who try to educationally influence the child: the need to know the child through the thorough systematic observation and to develop the best things that are hidden within the child (Opravilová E., Štverák V., 1982).

The work The Education of Man not only outlines Fröbel’s basic goals of education, upbringing or methodology of work effectively used in his institute, but also embodies his

pedagogical-philosophical theory based on three elemental principles, which Weston (Weston P., 2000) aptly characterizes as follows:

- Wholeness reflecting the human life in harmony with society and last but not least with nature postulates that school and life, knowledge and work, play and learning are not isolated components, but become consistent.
- Respect the innate human deity and human perfection in Rousseau's tradition and in line with avant-garde idealistic thinking.
- Activity as an action and thinking through play, learning and work, in which one creates a unique basis for a fully active, conscious and happy life in the society of which he is a part.

It should be mentioned that the main and constitutive topic in his work is the application of knowledge about continuous development and ontogenesis of man to education – within the discussion of how to fully develop the whole human being from birth to childhood, from preschool to younger school-age (Cipro M., 1991). As Lascarides and Hinitz (Lascarides V.C., Hinitz B.F., 2013) put it precisely, it is Fröbel who is at the forefront of using the theory of development for upbringing or education and putting it fully into practice. Thanks to many years of his consistent observation, he perceived and understood the very synchrony between the evolution of nature and the evolution of humanity, which is happening according to God's plan. He considered man to be constantly and always evolving, moving from one phase to another.

In congruence with the above illustrated things, we underline two fundamental ideas, which we will discuss in more detail below. One of the many Fröbel's famous and memorable statements is that education should not begin there, where the person being educated should be, but where he or she is as an individual being (Fröbel F., 1885). In a selection of his writings, Lilley (Lilley I., 1967, p. 59) notes that Fröbel had and felt the need to appreciate and recognize the right to raise a child from birth – fully accepting his or her whole nature and allowing him or her to freely use his or her immanent energy in all aspects. This education cannot advance rapidly, but must be going on in such a way that no powers of the child would be suppressed or overestimated. In line with the ontogenesis of the human being, he called on parents not to impose the premature ways and roles of adults on their children, so that they could become versatily evolving beings in accordance with the development of nature and its laws.

Good upbringing, proper teaching and subsequent learning should be governed by the law of free self-determination and strategic guidance of adult person should exclusively support the will of the interior of the degree, i.e. of the proper development period. Only in this way will each subsequent period represent a new seed and it becomes that, what – in each subsequent stage – this higher degree will require. In other words, perfection of the preceding period and its perfect ending is only a necessary condition for admission to the next, higher period (Opravilová E., Štverák V., 1982). And since the whole future is already contained in the child, according to Fröbel (Fröbel F., 1885), it is necessary to look at it in simple unity and wholeness and not to forget that what is neglected in early childhood will never be renewed and replaced.

There is an analogy in common ideas with the Slovak prominent pedagogue Samuel Ormis. Ormis, in his work *The Education for Seminarians and Parents*, which was published almost 50 years later, also emphasized that human education depends “on the purity

and order of the first days and on every influence and custom in the first years of life, for man is the same as a child and as a young man as a man and as an old man, and therefore in the beginning and at the end he remains the same” (Ormis S., 1871 p. 25).

At this point it should not be forgotten that in addition to precisely and explicitly defined laws of psychological development expressed as a solid and smooth process of socialization and personalization, which is taking place specifically individually, Fröbel intended to encourage parents with this work, so he meticulously described the stages of child development, which we will succinctly characterize and explain in the following section.

### **Developmental stages determined by human education**

According to Fröbel’s knowledge formulated in the *The Education of Man*, the child in the earliest childhood, especially immediately after birth, unlimitedly absorbs all the stimuli from his/her surroundings into himself/herself and his/her consciousness. Primarily, every child is interested in the use and exercise of body limbs and sensorimotor skills. He describes this period as a time for nourishment, when the child builds an intense relationship with the mother and feels love and security. Recognizing that infant activity already exists at this stage of life for their own use, he recommended that the children should not remain alone at this stage without being stimulated by selected objects and stimuli. Therefore, he recommended that there should be a cage with a bird hanging over the baby bed as a symbol of nature and man’s connection with it. Today, this cage is being replaced by hanging toys, which also stimulate children’s attention (Fröbel F., 1885).

According to Fröbel, the stage of childhood begins only when the child is able to use his physical and sensory activity to express his immanent thoughts and feelings out of his own inner need. Since we know from general psychology that the mind is tied with the speech, with the development of speech comes the organization of one’s own thoughts, which are expressed through speech. In Fröbel’s words (Fröbel F., 1885), the interior becomes external, i.e. is being exteriorised. At this stage of life and the stage of maturation and development, he recommends that both strategic education and training should be entrusted to the mother and father and their common family unity. We note that Fröbel considered early childhood and the subsequent preschool period, defined by the age since 3 to 7 years, to be the most important and decisive period for thoughtful education and adequate education, which was neglected in conventional educational practices years and centuries before. He considered the mother to be the most important person and educator in this period of the child. In this spirit, he demanded that mothers also be adequately educated to fulfil their role and task, to perfectly ensure the healthy, natural, adequate development of a little human being.

Fröbel helped and inspired mothers to well-thought-out upbringing and fulfilling their role also by the invention and production of didactically elaborated aids known as “Fröbel’s gifts”. His promotional trips later became a turning point for the establishment of his well-known “children’s gardens” (“kindergartens”), where children were professionally grown and cared for under the loving guidance of professionally trained (female) gardeners – educators (Opravilová E., Štverák V., 1982). Therefore, it turns out that his kindergarten pedagogy, thanks to which he made history and became famous, represents only “a late fruit in the tree of his knowledge and thinking” (Reble A., 1995, p. 177). The pre-school period is successively followed by the younger school age, about which we he writes that it is a period of discovering and learning new things and last but not least, it is

time, when the exterior is internalized, in other word, it is time, when children and students take in the world in small steps. The school is the institution that conveys this knowledge to the students for a pre-set goal and in its logical arrangement. In Fröbel's (Fröbel F., 1885) constructed content of education, we find that teaching should be religiously oriented, because without faith it is impossible to learn. It is also about the physical education, science-oriented subjects, language teaching, including reading, writing, storytelling and aesthetic education in the performance of singing, drawing, painting, modelling, which are used for artistic and creative expression of the soul.

The common denominator of the stages presented above is a play representing an ultimate and unique mean for the effective achievement of evident educational goals. We learn from the work that Fröbel regarded play as an instinctive, natural and meaningful activity for the child. It is through play that the child naturally learns to control his body, to achieve his/her goals, to speak his/her mother tongue fluently, learns about the outside world, spatial objects, learns to cooperate, tolerate, to be an active member of the group (Lascarides V.C., Hinitz B.F., 2013). Last but not least, Fröbel, in high deference to the child, wished that parents not to despise the game, but to support it and provide a space where they could play. He also wanted them to be allowed by adults/parents to actively participate and cooperate in work and activities with adults. It is from this demand that originates his – perhaps the most famous – premise: “Come, let us live with our children.” (Fröbel F., 1885).

## **Conclusions**

Fröbel's pedagogical-philosophical insights incorporated into the work *The Education of Man* representing the determination of education as a purposeful, strategic and appreciative influencing on spontaneous, individual, appropriate, solid and smooth development of the child's personality is constructively permanently beneficial for the present. Fröbel – thank to his pedagogical talent, devotion to upbringing and education, respect for the child's personality as a unique self-determining being and a comprehensive approach based on the analysis of immanent reminiscences anchored in a mosaic of key life observations stored in consciousness – came to conclusion, that early childhood is the basic and starting period for the further development of every single human being.

Based on the above, the main goal of the study was to indicate the theoretical basis of Fröbel's pedagogical system by analysing the work, which made visible its gnomonic quality and topicality. More than any other pedagogue or thinker, he appreciated the importance of thoughtful education of children of preschool and younger school-age, which influenced the development of pedagogical and psychological thinking. According to Cipra (Cipro M., 1984), the relevance of the Fröbel's work lies precisely in the deference to and high respect for the child's natural activity, in valuable psychological advice stemming from the observation of the child's spontaneity and in the pedagogical and truly effective activity in his educational institution. Despite the fact that he worked and lived more than one hundred and fifty years ago and was based only on the philosophy made of three elements – God, nature and man –, he created an excellent pedagogical system which, according to Šeracký (Šeracký F., 1982), after reforming by his followers, could and still can withstand the criticism of modern pedagogy and psychology.

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