

## Implementing the pedagogical potential of social and cultural activities in the institutional environment

### Implementar el potencial pedagógico de las actividades sociales y culturales en el entorno institucional

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## Summary

The article is concerned with the further development of social and cultural activities due to their great social demand. The authors of the article associate this task with the influence of social institutions on state cultural organizations providing leisure activities for different groups of the population. They have considered the specifics of such impacts in the Russian society of the transition period. As a result, they have revealed new opportunities in forming programs of social and cultural activities with the use of their creative achievements throughout the history of Russia and foreign countries. In addition, the article traces the most common trends in socio-cultural activities focused on institutional and state issues and determines the most promising forms of such activities. In this process, a significant role is played by socio-cultural clubs and mass theater programs. The article sets new priorities in the further development of amateur activities and performances, which effectively combines mass participation and skillfulness. The study also outlines prospects for a more active state participation in the organization of social and cultural activities.

**Key Words:** institution, social and cultural activity, population, pedagogical potential, creative activity, club, amateur performance.

## Resumen

El artículo se ocupa del mayor desarrollo de las actividades sociales y culturales debido a su gran demanda social. Los autores del artículo asocian esta tarea con la influencia de las instituciones sociales en las organizaciones culturales estatales que brindan actividades de ocio para diferentes grupos de la población. Han considerado los detalles de tales impactos en la sociedad rusa del período de transición. Como resultado, han revelado nuevas oportunidades en la formación de programas de actividades sociales y culturales con el uso de sus logros creativos a lo largo de la historia de Rusia y países extranjeros. Además, el artículo rastrea las tendencias más comunes en las actividades socioculturales enfocadas en temas institucionales y estatales y determina las formas más prometedoras de tales actividades. En este proceso, los clubes socioculturales y los programas de teatro de masas juegan un papel importante. El artículo establece nuevas prioridades en el desarrollo ulterior de las actividades y actuaciones de aficionados, que combinan efectivamente la participación masiva y la habilidad. El estudio también describe las perspectivas de una participación estatal más activa en la organización de actividades sociales y culturales.

**Palabras clave:** institución, actividad social y cultural, población, potencial pedagógico, actividad creativa, club, actuación amateur.

## Introducción

Among many definitions of culture, one of the most common is its consideration as a "second nature" created by people or "artificial reality". Thus, social and cultural activities should be viewed from the same perspective. These concepts can be defined as the purposeful formation of a new socially significant cultural reality in the system of social interactions.

This reality can be created both in the system of social institutions and in the extra-institutional environment (the so-called "lifeworld"). In this regard, it is necessary to define a social institution as an established system of organizing activities to satisfy various social needs of people and regulate this process in accordance with social norms.

If a social institution is ineffective, this means that it does not regulate and satisfy the social needs of a person and society. This situation is typical of social institutions that become personalized. In other words, social institutions begin to be influenced by individuals having the relevant appropriate authority. In this case, the subjectivism and private interests of people responsible for their functioning interfere in the activity of social institutions (Osipov, 2003).

Such an institution "becomes less and less focused on achieving the main goal of its existence, i.e. ensuring a specific social need" (Osipov, 2003, p. 372). Accordingly, it is important to develop objective criteria for assessing the effectiveness of social institutions and their actors, including socio-cultural activities conducted in the institutional environment. The corresponding scientific literature also regards this environment as the "systemic world" in contrast to the life or civil world, where the role of social institutions is not so decisive in the everyday life of people.

The "systemic world" has resulted from the existing structure of society enshrined in legal acts and norms of public morality. It strives to maintain the current social order and develop appropriate cultural norms, standards and models for the assessment of a particular socio-cultural activity.

Within the framework of socio-cultural activities, the influence of social institutions is mainly represented by state cultural bodies that regulate and determine the social significance and efficiency of cultural institutions, ensure and organize this activity.

It is required to study the positive role of the state as the main actor of the institutional environment, promoting public demand and realizing the pedagogical potential of socio-cultural activities. This study should identify real opportunities for improving the interaction of cultural institutions with various state structures in the organization of socio-cultural activities for various groups of the population. In particular, this full-fledged interaction is hindered by a widespread prejudice towards the state as unlawfully restricting certain social and cultural initiatives of citizens. Even G.W.F. Hegel wrote, "The idea that freedom of thought and mind is indicated only by deviation from, or even hostility to what is everywhere recognized, is most persistent with regard to the state" (Hegel, 1990, p. 525).

G.W.F. Hegel's "Philosophy of Right" substantiated the social necessity of the relative independence of the state and its structures from society in the interests of all its members. Since the state objectifies the "objective spirit", it forms the objective reality in which its citizens live. We might accept or reject G.W.F. Hegel's interpretation of the state but each member of society should have not only the rights granted by the state but also certain responsibilities in relation to the latter. The philosopher compared these duties with the duties of sons in relation to their parents. These obligations guarantee the rights of citizens, and the state itself should not be built over power but the order necessary for the life and safety of all citizens (Hegel, 1977).

Based on these state properties forming the corresponding institutional environment, T. Hobbes' "Leviathan" substantiated the need for a state. This role of state and institutional environment is also emphasized by contemporary Russian culturologists (Zinovev, 2004; Remizov, 2005).

Accordingly, it is important to study not so much institutional limitations of a particular socio-cultural activity that satisfies various sociocultural needs of the population as the possibilities of realizing the pedagogical potential of this activity in the institutional environment formed mainly by state structures.

## **Methods**

In this regard, it is necessary to study the productive influence of the institutional environment on the pedagogical content of socio-cultural activities held in cultural institutions. In relation to the ambiguous impact of social institutions, mainly in the form of state bodies, on socio-cultural activities, we need to study the Soviet experience of organizing such activities. Regardless of the ideological functioning of the Soviet cultural institutions organizing socio-cultural activities, we can determine their positive features as a special professional activity related to the sphere of social engineering. The whole system of cultural services in the Soviet state was "tailored" to the

formation of a new person, i.e. the builder of communism who needs a certain set of qualities enshrined in the "moral code of the builder of communism".

Despite changes in the ideological context of modern Russian society, socio-cultural activities still aim at forming a certain type of personality, but with a different set of traits and moral attitudes.

In general, this type of person is characterized by the following personality traits: independence, initiative, proactive attitude, desire for creative self-realization, tolerance, the ability to take personal responsibility for one's behavior, readiness for mutual assistance, cooperation and dialogue with other members of society, regardless of their worldviews, values and lifestyle; respect for the rule of law and patriotism.

Since socio-cultural activity as a special type of professional activity was formed during the Soviet period (mainly in the institutional environment) and achieved many socially significant results (Zharkov, Chizhikov, 1998; Yaroshenko, 2013), its pedagogical and organizational technologies should be adapted to the further democratization of the Russian society within the new institutional environment (Kamenets et al., 2020). We should also rethink the role of the "official" and "systemic" world in developing the skills of civic and socio-cultural activity in various groups of the population, which is not always realized for the benefit of people. It is necessary to record both state failures in the socialization and inculturation of an individual and the positive results associated with the very existence of the country and its further social, economic and cultural development (for example, reforms of Peter the Great).

The comprehension of the Soviet experience in the context of social and cultural institutes reveals a positive pedagogical impact on the population, which, with all the ideological costs and socially negative consequences, had undoubted achievements (for example, the contradictory experience of the Soviet education and enlightenment).

It is worth mentioning that Soviet communism was a modernist project based on the ideas of the French enlighteners and their motto – "freedom, equality, brotherhood". According to N. Berdyaev (1990) and A. Zinoviev (1991; 1994), the main historical mistake was that communist ideas were mastered by the Soviet people in the form of a religion rather than a scientific theory.

This striving for totalitarian control over society had its own historical prerequisites. In a scandalous book dedicated to the Russia of the 19th century, the Marquis de Custine highlighted the importance of the middle class for the development of democracy, but with the following proviso: "the merchants, who would form a middle class, are so few they cannot count in the State. Writers are counted by ones or twos in each generation; the artists are like the writers – their small number brings them esteem but, while their rarity serves their personal fortune, it hurts their social significance. Lawyers do not exist in a country where there is no justice. Where, then, can one find that middle class which forms the might of States and without which a people is only a herd led by a few skillfully trained blood-hounds? I have not mentioned a class of men who should be reckoned neither among the great nor among the small – these are the sons of the priests. Most of them become minor clerks and this population of clerks is the curse of Russia. It forms a sort of corps of obscure nobility which is very hostile to the great nobles, a nobility whose spirit is anti-aristocratic in the true political significance of the word and which is, nonetheless, heavy-handed with the serfs. It is these men, who will start the next revolution in Russia" (The Marquis de Custine, 1990, p. 123).

If we do not consider the above-mentioned assessments of Russia too harsh and subjective, we can note that a traditional temptation for Russia and its institutions is the imitation of civic activity by special "jubilant" programs on various occasions by means of socio-cultural activity instead of real-life involvement in various types of systematic cultural activities that have social and pedagogical significance.

An alternative to this trend is some positive features of organizing socio-cultural activities in the Soviet period. Consequently, we need to study the following phenomena:

– The participation of various groups of the population and even those who traditionally have a high level of employment: labor force, members of production teams, students, etc. in different types of social and cultural activities;

– The development of the social, cultural and political activity of the population through participation in various amateur associations, hobby clubs, mass theater events, etc. (script-acting and pedagogical technologies of the amateur movement have not been studied enough);

– The development of amateur creativity of the population, regardless of skill levels, social and economic status, therefore, it is necessary to study and further develop pedagogical technologies for combining mass character and mastery in amateur groups (Anufrieva, 2013; Baklanova, 1992).

These opportunities for involving the Soviet population in socio-cultural activities were supported by the state as an important direction of cultural policy. Currently, there is no federal management of a club network that develops socio-cultural activities. The activity of clubs, which are being renamed (for example, into "cultural centers"), is managed mainly at the level of municipalities. Thus, the scale of their socio-cultural activities has been decreased.

## **Results**

While analyzing possibilities of the institutional environment in developing the pedagogical potential of socio-cultural activity, we have proved that this environment can guarantee stable boundaries between the uncontrolled market of cultural services and the sphere of voluntary disinterested activity of all actors in the areas of social life that are significant for society (Romanov, Korlyugov, Krasilnikov, 1996; Orlova, 2017). Such social and cultural activities are as follows: the organization of leisure time for adolescents and seniors; the participation of young people in various types of creative activities; the development of amateur collector's activity; the initiation of civil activity of the population through social and cultural activities, etc.

At the same time, civil initiatives have formed a certain system of moral imperatives that are relevant for any socio-cultural activity in accordance with institutional requirements. These are the famous "Three Nos": 1) "No" to physical violence against a person and its propaganda in the socio-cultural sphere; 2) "No" to Nazism and any manifestation of racial or national exclusivity; 3) "No" to the monopoly on the truth definition. One more "No" can be added – "No" to cause harm to the health and safety of an individual.

Social institutions represent a system of norms and standards of social behavior, providing control over various types of socio-cultural activity of the population in the interests of society (Berger, Luckmann, 1995; Dridze, 1994).

Scholars emphasize the main conditions that should be considered when organizing social and cultural activities (Reznik, 1998):

– The self-development of socio-cultural activities, which consists in creating new forms of organization and directions of socio-cultural activities with due regard to not only private interests but also public needs;

– Administrative and bureaucratic "pressure" on certain types of socio-cultural activities while minimizing the social and cultural activity of the population;

– The organization of socio-cultural activities to solve pedagogical and social problems as an addition to state and institutional structures.

In each of these options, the ratio of social and pedagogical aspects differs, which is crucial for the organization of institutionally significant forms and directions of socio-cultural activity.

The first option ("self-development") is the emergence of socio-ecological niches to meet social needs by means of socio-cultural activities. These formations can be included in the institutional environment for their observance of certain moral and legal norms (for example, the principle of "Four Nos" discussed above).

These groups and associations (mainly of adolescents and young people) aim at defending private and group interests using the possibilities of socio-cultural activities that have a pedagogical aspect. In general, it is connected with the acquired experience of positive social interaction with the immediate environment, the search for one's personal identity, values and worldviews. The latter might even be opposite to the dominant public morality. Most often, this opposition is conditioned by the absence of full-fledged conditions for the positive and creative self-realization of individuals in various spheres of life. In this case, asociality and counterculture compensate for the lack of such self-realization.

The ability of state institutions to create organizational forms and initiate socio-cultural activity, where such a need is satisfied, is of great importance.

The second option is to improve socio-cultural activities through overcoming administrative and bureaucratic dictate that suppresses the independent social and cultural activity of the population. Widespread administrative arbitrariness in this area has been discussed in literature and art (such comedy movies as "Carnival Night", "Old Acquaintance", "Flute Solo", etc.). The negative consequences of the interference of state structures and their representatives in socio-cultural activities can be overcome by expanding the organizational and legal capabilities of participants in socio-cultural activities within cultural institutions. Thus, the foreign experience of establishing public bodies managing such institutions and entire branches of culture is quite significant (for example, public councils of museums, clubs, libraries, etc.). In this case, the state has a unique opportunity to implement the pedagogical potential of various social and cultural activities through appropriate legal and economic mechanisms, the necessary information and educational activities that contribute to the development of cultural interests and demands of the population by means of socio-cultural activities.

The third option presupposes an initial balance of social and pedagogical aspects, forming a stable socio-cultural identity of each active participant in the socio-cultural activity. Social and cultural interests are realized in the form of various hobbies, among which the most popular are amateur collecting clubs. The pedagogical potential of such associations is enormous and can be fully used in state cultural policy. In total, over 200 types of socially significant amateur activity exist in Russia. Amateur associations can efficiently interact with government agencies to develop cultural interests and demands of the population, providing the resource base of museums in terms of collecting and gathering activities. This forms the "pedagogy of leisure" in relation to the younger generation. Being involved in organized amateur activities, they expand their boundaries and develop cultural-cognitive interests and research abilities (Ionin, 2004).

In all three options, socio-cultural activity represents the systemic participation of the population in social activities and creative self-realization. The involvement of various social and age groups in the cultural processes is significantly expanded. There are also new prospects for using the resources of the institutional environment for implementing the pedagogical potential of the socio-cultural activity.

## Discussion

The further prospects for social and cultural institutions are associated with their two main organizational forms: creative amateur groups and hobby clubs. These two forms of organizing social and cultural activities interact sporadically, which hinders their integration into the existing institutional environment.

If an amateur creative team functions outside the club, its socio-cultural activities are professionalized by narrowing the audience. In the best-case scenario, such a team is in demand at certain "events" for celebrating holidays, election campaigns, etc. Its pedagogical tasks are subordinate to the public demonstration of achievements, preferably at a high professional level. Although the functioning of such collectives is important, the individual and comprehensive (social and cultural) development of their members is left aside. It becomes more significant to satisfy the requests of higher administrative bodies for performances within the so-called "official narrative" by means of socio-cultural activity in organizing a concert or exhibition.

At the same time, clubs created for the communication and socio-cultural interaction of people that do not need to "report" about their cultural achievements to administrative authorities are deprived of state support and receive the status of "marginalized" and "informal". Representatives of state structures and institutions often explain this position by the need to preserve freedom and democracy in the field of social and cultural activities that do not presuppose any state intervention.

It refers to a pseudo-liberal discourse, according to which "freedom from" is more valuable than "freedom for". The pedagogical potential of social and cultural activities organized in conformity with the club principle is still demanded by society. This potential can be realized under the skillful regulation of club activities, which does not mean overorganization but rather attributes a significant social and cultural status.

It is possible if the state maintains the required level of club culture as an indicator of the democracy of social relations that have developed in society. Club dialogues and their different forms create a mechanism for the participation of the population in the activities of the state and its institutions. Accordingly, the entire system of social and cultural activities supported by the state should focus not so much on the creation of new cultural products as on the socialization and spiritual-moral education of the population, especially the younger generation.

Creative teams should be regarded as a possible form of organizing socio-cultural activities, where each participant has the opportunity to play the role of a spectator, listener, expert on a particular creative activity or performer without any preconditions. However, this presupposes the further institutionalization of amateurs as full-fledged participants in social and cultural activities held in state cultural institutions, regardless of the level of creative and performing abilities.

In this case, not only the population benefits by getting more forms of participating in social and cultural activities but also professional creative teams that often have to combine two mutually exclusive approaches: the general availability of creative activity for the population and the need to select the most capable performers according to professional performance criteria.

In addition, an audience of listeners and spectators forms more intensively from "amateurs" visiting social and cultural clubs, whose lack is currently felt by many professional performers. These are "enlightened amateurs" who can assess the result provided by professional performers since they have the appropriate experience of perceiving the achievements of culture and art created in accordance with the state's guidelines for solving pedagogical tasks, social and cultural activities held in state institutions of culture and art: the formation of aesthetic tastes of the population, their skills and abilities of creative self-realization without obligatory public

demonstration (according to the relevant surveys, about 50% of the participants in amateur art do not like performing on stage), the moral and aesthetic development of the population, etc.

In this regard, we cannot but note a certain crisis in the activities of many state cultural institutions, when all the visitors are strictly divided into those who can create major products of socio-cultural activity and those who are assigned the role of their consumers (spectators and listeners). A full-fledged socio-cultural activity presupposes the involvement of visitors into the creation of a cultural product, if not directly, then indirectly and through the formation of appropriate club structures that influence the choice of repertoire, creative concept, acquisition of library and museum funds, the content of expositions, exhibitions, etc. It is recommended that each cultural institution forms its own audience (connoisseurs, experts, organizers, etc.) preferring a particular socio-cultural activity. The creation of such an audience is an institutional task of creative teams and the employees of state institutions and cultural bodies that ensure such a function of social institutions in relation to socio-cultural activities as enlightenment in a variety of socially significant spheres. This is legal, political, aesthetic and environmental education, which is currently one of the most important national tasks. For organizers of social and creative activities, it is premature to refuse the implementation of educational tasks with the help of such activities.

Among the forms of socio-cultural activity, mass gathering events (including theater performances and festivals) are significant for institutionalization. The main social task of such socio-cultural programs is to develop the situational social and cultural activity of the population and to train people in "spontaneity" (in Moreno's terms), which ensures the necessary level of independence and improvisation of social behavior. The latter is highly demanded in a transitional society not characterized by stability and predictability. The safety and self-preservation of people largely depend on these behavioral skills which are among the main priorities of any civilized state.

Mass theater events have become widespread in the organization of socio-cultural activities and the formation of the necessary social optimism, which is typical of any festive and entertaining culture. The pedagogical potential of socio-cultural activity consists in the formation of confidence among society members in achieving the social ideal as a combination of "goodness and beauty". It is important to ensure not only an appropriate state order for the creation of consolidating events but also an appropriate information environment broadcasting positive examples of public service, providing role models instead of examples and models of mass culture, awakening the base instincts of human nature and destructive patterns of social behavior.

## Conclusion

While studying the implementation of the pedagogical potential of socio-cultural activity in the institutional environment, we have drawn the following conclusions:

1. This issue can be solved through new socio-cultural activities and social environments, which presupposes the participation of each amateur. This environment should be built over a model of leisure clubs and salons that has proven its viability as a form of pastime both in Russia and abroad. From the pedagogical viewpoint, the value of the "club-salon" interaction consists in providing each visitor of a cultural institution with the role of a "creator" or an "amateur" in accordance with the requirements of the institutionalized audience of socio-cultural activities having their own social norms, rules, rituals, etc. as institutional regulators of the socio-cultural activity of visitors.

2. This social environment is capable of realizing different tasks of social institutions as the main or auxiliary means in relation to the corresponding institution (for example, institutions of education). This expands and legitimizes the social behavior of participants in socio-cultural

activities as active citizens and members of society who take a solid position in the process of their creative self-realization in various forms.

3. The formation of new social and cultural institutions significantly increases their efficiency, encourages many citizens to participate in public service and social interaction in accordance with the dominant moral and cultural norms, contributes to the further consolidation of Russian society.

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