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## Round Table “From the Psychology of Play to the Psychology of Learning: the Scientific School of D.B. Elkonin and B.D. Elkonin”

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Review of the round table on the topic “From the psychology of play to the psychology of teaching: the scientific school of D.B. and B.D. Elkonin”, dedicated to the 120th anniversary of the birth of D.B. Elkonin, which took place on February 29, 2024 at the Moscow State Psychological and Pedagogical University. Pedagogical University. The state of the Elkonin scientific school is reflected both from a historical point of view and from the point of view of new approaches developed within its framework recently, and related research perspectives. The participants agreed that the scientific school of D.B. Elkonin–B.D. Elkonin sets a fundamental trend in the development of cultural and historical psychology in the first third of the XXI century.

**Keywords:** D.B. Elkonin, B.D. Elkonin, scientific school of D.B. and B.D. Elkonin, cultural and historical psychology, teaching, game, educational activity, agency, initiative, subjectivity, productive action, search initiation, metasubject learning outcomes, “Tree of cultural and historical psychology”, periodization of mental development, journal of Cultural and Historical Psychology.

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## Круглый стол «От психологии игры к психологии учения: научная школа Д.Б. и Б.Д. Элькониных»

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Представлен обзор круглого стола на тему «От психологии игры к психологии учения: научная школа Д.Б. и Б.Д. Элькониных», посвященного 120-летию со дня рождения Д.Б. Элькониной, который состоялся 29 февраля 2024 г. в Московском государственном психолого-педагогическом. Состояние научной школы Элькониных отражено как с исторической точки зрения, так и с позиций новых подходов, разработанных в ее рамках в последнее время и связанных с ними исследовательских перспектив. Участники пришли к общему мнению о том, что научная школа Д.Б. Элькониной–Б.Д. Элькониной задает фундаментальный тренд развития культурно-исторической психологии в первой трети 21 столетия.

**Ключевые слова:** Д.Б. Эльконин, Б.Д. Эльконин, научная школа Д.Б. и Б.Д. Эльконовых, культурно-историческая психология, учение, игра, учебная деятельность, агентность, инициативность, субъектность, продуктивное действие, инициация поиска, метапредметные результаты обучения, «прочувствование», «Дерево культурно-исторической психологии», периодизация психического развития, журнал «Культурно-историческая психология».

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On February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024, the Moscow State University of Psychology & Education hosted a round table on the topic: “From the Psychology of Play to the Psychology of Learning: The Scientific School of D.B. and B.D. Elkonin”. It was dedicated to the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D.B. Elkonin’s birth, which was celebrated on this day, and opened a series of events dedicated to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of cultural-historical psychology (CHP), which are held throughout this year.

According to V.T. Kudryavtsev, the coincidence of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CHP with the anniversary of D.B. Elkonin is significant: it is thanks to scientists of his rank and circle that CHP not only entered the history of world science, but a century later it is being developed productively and diversely all over the world by new generations of researchers. D.B. Elkonin, within the framework of the “big” scientific school of Vygotsky-Leontiev-Luria, set brilliant examples of the implementation of the cultural-historical approach to the analysis of play and learning activities. This work was continued and significantly “advanced” by his son B.D. Elkonin, which allows us to speak of a unified school of D.B. and B.D. Elkonin in developmental and educational psychology.

K.N. Polivanova revealed the nature of the child’s agency in conjunction with related phenomena like initiative, autonomy, independence, and subjectivity, which merge in the phenomenon of agency. Agency is the ability to transform given social subject structures, overcoming “institutional” limitations, as well as impulsive “self-restrictions” in a situation of rigid socialization. The key to understanding this transformation (overcoming) is related to the concept of trial action in the works of B.D. Elkonin. Surplus trials, paradoxically, give selectivity, order to the child’s own actions, as opposed to an externally imposed order. K.N. Polivanova demonstrated this on the example of the historical transformation of exercises in the game with the exact same objects. In this case, the game is an event for the child to the extent that it contains the possibility of “crossing the boundary of semantic fields”. That’s what J.M. Lotman wrote about, and, after B.D. Elkonin and L.I. Elkoninova spoke about. Traditional society strives to organize children’s unpredictability, while modern society allows and supports that “order”, the mechanism of which are unpredictable children’s, including play, initiatives.

L.I. Elkoninova turned to the topic of the “non-classical”, according to D.B. Elkonin’s terminology, study of the genesis of play in CHP. The analysis of play using the “classical” cross-sectional method has a significant limitation. It does not allow to capture the duality of development, which is fundamental for the “non-classical” approach: when the phenomena of the child’s mental development in play are considered as phenomena of the development of play itself. Only then is it possible to conclude whether we are talking about the child’s development or only about the child’s functional pleasure, which is not always associated with a leap in development. This is determined by the nature of inclusion of a developmental psychologist in the child’s play activity in different qualities – as a researcher, diagnostician, “shaper” and therapist.

The report by Z.N. Novlyanskaya and E.V. Chudinova, which provoked a lively discussion, was devoted to the problem of productive action, which was developed by B.D. Elkonin. The coordination of the content of different academic subjects (biology and literature) can become a condition for initiating the productive action of young adolescents in the form of authoring action. The creation by students of an artistic work on the material of a scientific (biological) concept, which is in the process of formation, requires the transformation of the natural scientific eventuality of physiological processes, its subordination to the laws of cultural forms, characteristic of literature as a form of art. Provided that the “second tact of productive action” is realized, the “publication” of such a work (in B.D. Elkonin’s terms), it can become a step of development for the pupil. For teachers, the material of children’s works is diagnostic, allowing for the assessment of both the level of the formation of scientific concepts in children and the degree of their practical mastery of the concepts of “literary character” and “plot”. For a psychologist-researcher, the obtained material is of value, demonstrating the variety of ways of transforming everyday concepts into scientific ones.

B.D. Elkonin introduced new concepts in order to revitalize the conceptual matrix of the cultural-historical theory, this was the basis of P.G. Nezhnov and E.A. Bugrimenko’s report. Through his author’s thesaurus he sought to reconstruct the original meaning of the key principles of cultural-historical theory in order to set the conditions for a step forward. This thesaurus is filled

with many metaphors and trial terms to realize the intent of reconstruction. Ontogenesis was consistently held by both D.B. Elkonin and B.D. Elkonin in an extended context of the historical development. B.D. Elkonin's theory of mediated, trial and productive action is an example of this. At the same time, according to B.D. Elkonin, ideal forms of culture, in order to turn from "introduced" to "their own", should be mastered at the level of bodily "feeling" (a cross-cutting term of his works in recent years). It is at this level that the "quality of the developmental step" is determined. This circumstance caused B.D. Elkonin's interest in the ideas of psychoneurologist B.A. Arkhipov, the author of the system of diagnostics and correction, which is based on the ideas of the neuropedagogical space, joint educational environment, and the formation of self-governed activity associated with the "feeling" of corporeality. B.D. Elkonin not only made an attempt to superimpose on his own schemes of development the ideas of B.A. Arkhipov, with whom he started the cycle of works, but also introduced the terms "sorhythmia", "pause", "self-feeling"<sup>1</sup>, "somatognosis" and others.

*I.M. Ulanovskaya* spoke about the "Psychological and Pedagogical Conditions of the Formation and Development of the Metacognitive Competencies of Schoolchildren" collective monograph, prepared for publication by the staff of the Laboratory of Psychology of Junior Schoolchildren of the Psychological Institute of the Russian Academy of Education, which was headed by B.D. Elkonin. The book is dedicated to his memory. The uniqueness of the study is that the authors (G.A. Tsukerman, E.V. Chudinova, O.L. Obukhova, A.Z. Zak, E.V. Vysotskaya, I.M. Ulanovskaya, A.D. Lobanova, M.A. Yanishevskaya) analyzed the process of forming the foundations of schoolchildren's learning activity (LA) and its development during all years of school life: from the initial forms of first-graders' inclusion in LA built within the D.B. Elkonin—V.V. Davydov system to the developed forms of LA in school. The variety of developmental effects of LA, including the meta-educational results of learning, the methods and techniques of diagnostics of which are proposed by the authors, is connected with the students' mastering the palette of the means of organizing LA in its collective and individual forms.

*G.A. Tsukerman* analyzed the phenomenon of "searching for a way to initiate the search", this is how B.D. Elkonin defined the essence of mediation, in which he saw the central, form- and meaning-making link in the process of cultural mediation of activity. As applied to the LA of younger schoolchildren, this essence should be revealed at

two levels: in the project of a learning event and in the real meeting of the adult realizing this project with children. The project ways of initiating the search are quite well known: they include the CONTENT of learning, learning tasks, learning models, and the form of child-adult interaction (in particular, control and evaluation interaction), and the polarization of the learning space, and many others. Following D.B. Elkonin, B.D. Elkonin considered the key to understanding the event of the meeting between teacher and pupils to be cumulative action, in which the ground is formed for the cultivation of the orientation to the actions of the other. The contradictory nature of this phenomenon has yet to be revealed.

*V.K. Zaretsky* shared his memories of D.B. Elkonin's lectures and meetings with B.D. Elkonin.

He also spoke about the history of the birth of the idea of the "Tree of cultural-historical psychology" project and its realization. The idea appeared in 2016, when Boris Elkonin, discussing the state of the CHP, said that this tradition has already counted five generations, if we count L.S. Vygotsky as the first generation, and his closest associates and followers (A.N. Leontiev, A.R. Luria, D.B. Elkonin, B.W. Zeigarnik, A.V. Zaporozhets, P.Y. Galperin, etc.) as the second. V.K. Zaretsky noted that he and B.D. Elkonin had the opportunity to learn both from the representatives of the second generation and their students (V.V. Davydov, V.P. Zinchenko, etc.). Our students, he continued, belong to the fourth and fifth generations. But the ideas of L.S. Vygotsky himself are still interpreted differently, developing along different lines. Therefore, the idea came about to describe the state of CHP psychology as it is seen through the eyes of the representatives of the different CHP directions themselves. Thus began the realization of the project, within the framework of which a number of interviews with Russian psychologists, who identify themselves with cultural-historical psychology, have already been conducted and published. The last of the published materials was an interview with B.D. Elkonin himself (see the "Counseling Psychology and Psychotherapy" journal, 2023, No. 3).

*N.N. Nechaev* stressed the need to develop the ideas of D.B. Elkonin's article: "To the Problem of the Periodization of Mental Development in Childhood" ("Voprosy Psichologii", 1971, No. 4). The article has become textbook, its provisions are presented in textbooks. Unfortunately, no attention is paid to the fact that the author himself regarded his periodization scheme only as a hypothesis, which requires serious clarification. This is evidenced by his published diary entries. Thus, in a note dated 11.12.1983 he said that his periodization ba-

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<sup>1</sup> B.D. Elkonin in a number of key positions relied on the provisions of N.A. Bernstein, who is the author of the formula: "Movement reacts as a living being". A.V. Zaporozhets, analyzing the genesis of arbitrary movement, noted: in order to become controllable, movement must first become *perceptible* (Zaporozhets A.V. Development of arbitrary movements. M., 1960). Both B.D. Elkonin and B.A. Arkhipov were interested in the process of "spontaneous" action (movement).

sically captured the dynamics of development, but the *internal mechanism of these dynamics* was not revealed. In some cases, the “adult-child” relation is mediated by the “object”. In others, the “child-object” relationship is mediated by the “child-adult” relationship. In any type of activity all three elements of the system are present and necessary, only in different types of activity a different system of mediation is observed” (*Elkonin D.B. Sel. psychol. works. M., 1989, p. 519*). In essence, this makes us reconsider the nature of the developmental mechanism as it was described by D.B. Elkonin in the above-mentioned article. The contradiction between the level of development of motivation and the level of development of operational possibilities for the realization of the leading activity is the source not of the development of activity as a whole, but of the functional-genesis of individual modes of subject activity. And this is only one example of the significance of the materials of D.B. Elkonin’s scientific diaries, among which only a small part has been published, and the remaining part is awaiting publication. This legacy should become the heritage of our science.

*A.D. Maidansky* supported N.N. Nechaev’s proposal to publish D.B. Elkonin’s scientific diaries in full. To date, only a few dozen pages of his diary entries have been published. And as we know from L.S. Vygotsky’s notebooks and A.N. Leontiev’s notebooks, there we can find a lot of valuable material for the development of their scientific programs and CHP as a whole.

“The chief among chiefs”, this is how *A.A. Shvedovskaya* characterized B.D. Elkonin as the editor-in-chief of the “Cultural-Historical Psychology” journal. In 2025,

the journal will celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The first issue of the journal opened with the article: “Readiness to Think” by V.P. Zinchenko, one of its founders and its first editor-in-chief; the article was devoted to analyzing the Elkonin-Davydov system of developmental learning. For nine years, from 2005 to 2014, V.P. Zinchenko headed the publication. After his passing, B.D. Elkonin carried the banner of the journal’s leadership from 2014 to 2023. During this time, the journal has risen to the top of the first quartile in international databases of scientific knowledge, which, undoubtedly, testifies to the breadth and strength of interest in CHP in the world, as well as in the journal as the platform representing it. *A.A. Shvedovskaya* recalled the words of B.D. Elkonin about the role and place of the journal in the development of the cultural-historical approach. In June 2019, in an interview with the PsyJournals.ru Psychological Publications Portal, she said: “The idea of the journal is to represent the history and modernity of cultural-historical psychology. And the modernity of cultural-historical psychology is not a cliché. What is the intrigue of modern CHP, how is Vygotskianism moving? These are the questions the journal tries to answer.”

The main conclusion that can be drawn from the discussion is the following. The unified scientific school of D.B. and B.D. Elkonin, which links the cultural-historical psychology of the 21st century with its origins, has now been formed and determines the “modernity” of CHP, that’s what Boris D. Elkonin spoke about.

The video of the roundtable meeting is available on the MSUPE YouTube channel via the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yOtRfz9YxKQ>.

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