

# Situation and the Key Sought of a Mediation Action

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The topic of the article refers to the way and method of the Mediation Action implementation. Specified method could be built by the Mediator in the connection of two Positions: in the first place, a consideration of behaviour that will, in the second place, allow to appropriately join («wedge») its flow. Correlating the consideration of behaviour and the method of its reconstruction is the key problem of upbuilding and unfolding the Mediation Action. It implies that the Mediator views the process of action performing by another person as/in a certain language – a language, in which appropriate method of joining the unfolding behaviour could be identified and comprehended.

**Keywords:** mediation action, mediation action problem, mediation language, axis, support, action field, mutual reflection of axis, field and supports.

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# Ситуация и ключевое искомое Посреднического Действия (ПД)

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Тема статьи – способ осуществления Посреднического Действия. Указанный способ может быть выстроен Посредником в связывании двух Позций: во-первых, такого рассмотрения поведения, которое, во-вторых, позволит уместно включиться («вклиниться») в его течение. Соотнесение способа рассмотрения поведения и способа его реконструкции – ключевая задача построения и развертывания Посреднического Действия. Сказанное предполагает, что Посредник рассматривает сам процесс выполнения действия другим человеком в определенном языке – таком языке, в котором может быть осмыслен и выявлен уместный способ включения в развертывающееся поведение.

**Ключевые слова:** посредническое действие, задача посреднического действия, язык посредничества, ось, опора, поле действия, взаимно-отображение оси, поля и опор.

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## I

The point of MA is to construct an Action; its motive<sup>1</sup> is to overcome the natural form of behavior in a

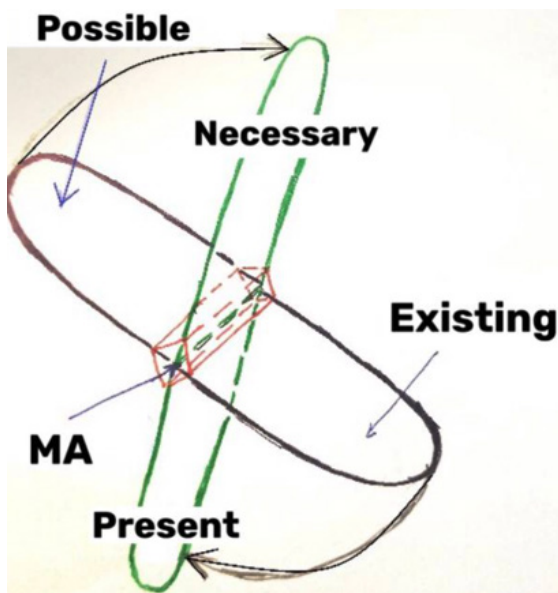
cultural form [4], where the natural form is an activity involved in some unidentified element, i.e., coming from an external cause, and the cultural form is an activity connected with the construction of its own way (image)

<sup>1</sup> Understood not only "psychologically", but similarly to the "motive of fictional work".

of its deployment – with the construction of Actions. Actions (subject, game, educational, productive) are the essence of cultural forms of behavior [5]. Overcoming the natural form of behavior while constructing an action<sup>2</sup> is an act of development, an Event of MA [20; 22]. The event, the center of which is the “turn” of activity (a change of its semantic field). This is the transition from the efforts of directly achieving the required (necessary) to construction of an image of the path (space of possibilities) to achieving it.

Construction of an image of the action deployment, i.e., of a method of the Action Time saturation, understood as a transition from the previous one (“was”) to the image of the pre-visible (“will be”) through the present (“is”)<sup>3</sup>, is the key task<sup>4</sup> of MA. In this situation, the construction of an Image of the Path (“Road”) of an action is the motivational and goal-oriented beginning of its orientation, i.e., required in the MA task. The question of what the unknown<sup>5</sup> is remains open.

The event scheme of MA implies the correlation of two transitions in the deployment of the action [23, p. 268]: a) transition from the present situation to the required one and b) the transition from the existing scheme (image) of action (usually unconscious) to another possible scheme. In my opinion, this is the construction of the correlation of Real and Ideal forms of action. The construction and retention of the correlation of two transitions, i.e., the reconstruction of their mutual display is what is sought in the deployment of MA. This is a fairly general assumption and it will be specified in this article.



Pic 1. MA Event

## II

The subject of mediation clearly appears in two different ways of understanding experimental genesis and internalization – their comprehension in the works of L.S. Vygotsky and P.Y. Galperin. It is significant that in both cases we are talking, in the words of P.Y. Galperin, about the formation of a “separate action”.

In the view of P.Y. Galperin and his collaborators about the third type of orientation (the third type of doctrine), the key is the defining of the means (for example, measures for constructing the Number Concept [7], key points for writing a letter [8]) and through this setting a general method for constructing an orienting basis for action. Approximate basis of action, according to P.Y. Galperin, – a system of support-guidance for the perform an action, in the development of which its zone acts (“Zone of proximal development”). In the further stages of formation—internalization—the orientation of the action decreases and thus mastered. However, the way the subject himself discovers the idea-meaning (function) of the given means, i.e., their “support”, remains hidden (removed) in the theory of gradual formation.

In the concept and experiments of L.S. Vygotsky and his collaborators, the instrument for constructing an orientation is the sign (in the words of Vygotsky, “a psychological tool”). Mediation is constructed as the identification of its idea-meaning through correlation of meaning with the conditions of the task (for example, correlation of the idea of a drawing with a phrase to remember). Here the instrumentality, the “support”, and the field of possible action are not “given”, but they are built up and revealed in the joint comprehension of the sign function by a child and an adult (an experimenter and a subject). This construction is detection and it is individualized (internalized) [4].

In D.B. Elkonin’s work on the development of objective actions in early childhood [25, pp. 130–141], to be precise in observations of the formation of an objective action, he emphasizes the specifics of such a method of transmitting an action pattern from an adult to a child, in which the child turns an adult pattern into his own way of unfolding an action.

In my works, I tried to follow and strengthen the beliefs of D.B. Elkonin [20; 22; 23]. There the construction of an image of the unfolding of an action acted as a statement by the child himself of the boundaries of the natural form of behavior (“natural aspirations”), and this statement was built as a return to the adult of his words of warning in a boundary situation (“ouch-ouch-ouch”, “no-no-no”, “this way-not this way”). Such reversibility is a condition for signifying the situation

<sup>2</sup> The initiation of direct-emotional communication in infancy, understood as pre-communication, also requires overcoming the infant’s reflexive reactions [22].

<sup>3</sup> The ‘triplet’ of ‘Was-Is-Will be’ are the key words of B.A. Arkhipov in understanding the evolution of corporeality in ontogenesis [1].

<sup>4</sup> Also understood not as an externally provided ‘task’ but as a form of cultural behavior.

<sup>5</sup> S.L. Rubinstein calls for a distinction between “required” and “unknown” in problem solving [13].

(the field of action). It is important that an adult, while addressing his word to a child, at the same time carefully, as if probing, and not “imperiously” acts with the child’s body<sup>6</sup> [1]. This adult action can be called a gesture action. The word of an adult emphasizes the compatibility of actions and only in this way there is a chance of the child signifying his behavior in the reverse appeal to an adult.

### III

What has been said should be preceded by the question hidden in the above-mentioned studies about the conditions of “wedging” the intermediary into the behavior of the “mediated” (student, child) – the question of the conditions of construction, in the words of D.B. Elkonin, of Cumulative Action. And here it is important to understand and analyze not only the successful actions of the child (the “luck” of mediation), but also the way of “turning” the child’s behavior initiated by an adult – a way of building a Cumulative Action.

In the observations cited by D.B. Elkonin and me, the act of mediation was carried out by an adult partly intuitively. But in understanding the structure of the experimental genesis, that is, the device of the Intermediary Act, analytics and a description of the device of the Mediator’s way of thinking are necessary – the way of the method of design and solution of the MA problem. It is necessary to say what and how the Mediator sees and how he forms this vision by engaging in the action of his “subject” (child, student), building his presence in it.

Footnote: See an example from an article by D.B. Elkonin about how a grandmother teaches her grandson to get off the couch [25 p. 135]

### IV

The stated vision, firstly, and, secondly, the very method of inclusion, “wedging” into the behavior of another person must have different, but related forms, since they are constructed from different Positions. It is one thing to consider from the outside, when the behavior unfolds before you and it is necessary to catch in some language its very unfolding, and another thing is to pertinently enter into the very reconstruction of the unfolding behavior itself. The observation must be displayed in the construction-reconstruction of the observed – the language of description in the consideration of behavior and the language of its reconstruction must communicate, connect with each other. And the main thing here is to find the language of action unfolding in its difference from the language of description of action, as if it has already been done.

### V

In his joint article with B.A. Arkhipov [1], B.A. Arkhipov’s way of describing the structure and evolution of a child’s living corporeality was “tested” in describing another reality—the reality of unfolding Action—the transition from the Past to the Future through the Present. In this article, Action functioned as a relationship of its “Axis,” “Supports,” and “Field”<sup>8</sup>. Axis, Supports, and Field were presented as the language of Anthropotechnical Action.

The Axis was understood as the conception of the deployment of the Semantic Field of action (building a house, drawing a picture, etc.) – as a certain ideal “line” setting the process (saturation of the time of action), i.e., holding the direction in “turns” of action’s realization.

Thus, the Axis was understood as a requirement for accomplishment, and it is in this sense that retention or

<sup>6</sup> See example from D.B. Elkonin’s article about a grandmother teaching her grandson to get off the sofa [25 p. 135].

<sup>7</sup> In “Towards a Philosophy of Action”, M.M. Bakhtin argues that ethics as a science (‘research’) cannot pretend to be an analysis of living action itself [2].

<sup>8</sup> “Supports” and “Fields” are P. Ya. Galperin’s key words in describing orientation activity [6].

reconstruction of the Axis becomes the goal of action orientation (namely orientation, not fulfillment in accordance with the predetermined image of what is required)<sup>9</sup>. In actions requiring mediation, the direction is constructed and reconstructed, and does not exist in advance; it contains the hidden modes of sought-for action.

The retention and deployment of the direction of action are carried out in a certain Space of Possibilities — the Field as a kind of topic<sup>10</sup> that sets the possibilities of accomplishment together with its “turns” in which it is required to retain the direction<sup>11</sup>. The Field is the Space of Possibilities of action. Supports are the means (e.g., reference points) with the help of which the Field of Action holds its Conception (Axis). The Field of Action is a composition of Axes.

However, once again: the Axis, the Field, and the Supports will become reference points for the Mediator’s “entry” into the other person’s action only when the way-process of their mutual construction becomes the subject of his “imagination” (embodiment into the image).

In the above descriptions of the construction of subject actions in early childhood [25; 20; 23], the purpose of the adult is the reconstruction of the axial beginning of directly resultant action, i.e., reconstruction of the natural form of action in which the Axis is as if the identity of directions of “gaze and movement”<sup>12</sup>. Exactly in this reconstruction — in comprehension-testing of the adult’s gestures-words — that the child still distinguishes the implicit boundaries, i.e., requiring special mastering of “intervals-bonds” of their movements.

## VI

The initiation of the construction of the Axis, Supports and Field is required in the Mediator task. What is sought is the objectivity of the act of mediation — the initiation of search, probation and testing of their coherence. It must be obvious that the Axis is represented in the Field of action, and the supports exist exactly in the way of this representation. A child, on the contrary, acts straightforwardly, not cognizing and not creating the way of this representation — not building a system of Supports. The nature of the pattern of action, with which an adult “wedges” into the activity of a child with the words-gestures “that, not that”, is the very way of displaying the Axis in the Field — the structure of the

“area” of a child’s aspiration and thereby initiation of the probation-testing of the Supports as the “bends” of Axes. It is here where a child discovers the shown boundaries of significant aspirations — “natural” activity is transformed into the mastering of the Pattern of unfolding Action. Human action takes place not in the “environment”, as a self-sufficient presence of the reaction, but in a certain “X-field” [19, p. 216–220] of mutual mappings of its Axis, Field and Supports<sup>13</sup>. These interactions can be called “internal patterns of action”<sup>14</sup>. Revealing and initiating the probation of the ways of these displays in the Aggregate Action is the key sought for Mediation.

Apart from that, it should be noted that the method of representation of the Axis into the composition of the Supports (Field) is “caught” and identified as being sought in the so-called “tasks for consideration” (“creative tasks”). Their intrigue lies in the “provocation” of the commission of action according to an already known and unconscious pattern, which secretly connects the Axis and Supports in the provoked Field of Action. In mediating their solution, the experimenter, with the help of special sign-symbolic means, had to initiate the search-identification of these hidden patterns-modes of action and their transformation in the materials of the problem itself [18]. Here such a transformation appears as a creative act. Also, the Aggregate Intermediary Action is a Creative Act, an Event of revealing and reconstructing the inner form of action — the hidden relations “Axis–Support–Field”, defining the Space of Action Possibilities.

## VII

Previous descriptions and judgments were limited to the assumption of the place of mediation only in a “separate” action. It is necessary to consider MA (mediative action) in the evolution of action — inclusion in a larger context.

For example, my daughter, having learned to carefully overcome obstacles, while repeating the word “like that” addressed to me, subsequently built her own space of opportunities for her free movement [20]. In this larger space there were limitations which were not previously encountered in a “separate” action. Curbs at the transition to the carriageway, i.e., a new type of borders could be such limitations. Here a new warning arose, a new “like that—not like that”, “yes—no”, which

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<sup>9</sup> So, for example, when I am writing this article, I am not given an image of its end; the finality, the accomplishment of the article is not just set by the last word, phrase or paragraph.

<sup>10</sup> Not ‘metric’.

<sup>11</sup> For example, when walking in the forest using a compass in search of mushrooms, you may encounter bogs, blocked trees that you have to avoid, but you have to go around and return to the direction indicated by the compass - without straying from it.

<sup>12</sup> Very clearly the reconstruction of the action axis came out in D.B. Elkonin’s description of how a grandmother taught her grandson to get off a sofa with his feet rather than face down [25, p. 135].

<sup>13</sup> Here we can say, in L.S. Vygotsky’s words, that the Axis itself is the Fabula of the action, and the way the Axis is reflected in the Field of Action is its Plot [3].

<sup>14</sup> By analogy with the “inner form of the word” analysed in the works of G. Speth [17].

have a different meaning — a different reason for changing the rhythm of walking. In the process of teaching how to play musical instruments, rhythm, intonation, the way the note sequence is played — change during the transitions from the scale to the performance of a musical piece.

In Development-aimed Teaching (DAT), the notion of generalization — the formation of a class, i.e., fields of objects — is introduced through modeling. The foremost concern of the teacher is the construction of a model (scheme) of a class of objects. We can say that generalization is retained in modeling (the construction of the concept is retained). Modeling (scheme) is the axis of scientific conceptuality. The next step is when the teacher moves to the “expansion” or other change of the class of objects — a new Field — the teacher initiates testing and, if necessary, changing of the model [15; 16]. The model becomes the Basis of generalization.

There are many similar examples, and these are examples of changes in the Design (Semantic field) in the evolution of action [12]. It is in these changes of Meaning, along with the changes of Space of Possibilities (Fields), that the transformation of what was previously an Axis into a Basis of Action should take place. It is important that such changes — changes in the chronotope of action — require special probation-testing of the “former” axis for its “basis-likeness”, require a new initiation of orientation<sup>15</sup>. With such changes, the action that “turned into an operation” (in the terminology of A.N. Leontiev) is resumed and transformed. Sequential changes of the Field in the evolution of the action — the place of MA — the place of initiation of probation-testing and reconstruction of the Axis display in the Field.

Here, in the construction of a new Field of Action, requiring the transformation of the Axis into Basis and a change in the way of building the Basis itself, that the meaning of interiorization is revealed. Interiorization can be fully understood not in the construction of a “separate” action, but in the development or evolution of an action — the emergence of its new Axis and, accordingly, the way it is displayed in a different Field of Action. It is likely that it is in such transformations that the actual “Activity” “matures” (this can be traced<sup>16</sup> to the examples of the formation of the so-called “leading activities”).

### VIII

The question of overcoming-transformation of a mode of action as a hidden display of the Axis in the

Field in the so-called creative act or in one’s language (Productive Action) has already been partly discussed above [21].

This overcoming-transformation was revealed in the above-mentioned laboratory experiment on the method of mediating the solution of special “creative” tasks. The limitations of this experiment lie in the fact that what was proposed was a ready-made problem, moreover, a problem having only one correct solution. This correct solution proved that the creative act was made<sup>17</sup>.

In the cultural practices of creativity (scientific, artistic, etc.) there are no ready-made, “provided” tasks and their unambiguous solutions. What then can prove that the creative act has been made? I believe that this proof can be the fact of the “capture of the public” (viewers, readers, listeners) by the intrigue of overcoming-transformation of hitherto considered universal models of action, i.e., the intrigue of revealing new space for action.

Such is the essence of the “friend and foe distinction” — where friend confirms or approves of the meaning of what was done. This approval shows that what has been done can become the Support of a new “road” of the Creator — a new Axis (of ideas), as well as confirmation that the Creator is able to build a new Field of Action<sup>18</sup>. In Productive Action, the methods of correlating the Axis, Supports and Field and their confirmation is revealed most fully and extensively.

#### *To summarize:*

1. The task of PA is to initiate the identification and reconstruction of the internal form of action, i.e., of a hidden image that starts the action, and builds a new image of its development.

2. The solution of this problem requires the correlation of two Positions — two forms of the presence of the mediator: firstly, the way to consider the development of an action and, secondly, testing the way of its development in the way of reconstructing.

3. Considering action development — creating the image of its development is built in the language of understanding of actions as correlations of Axis, Supports and Field.

4. Revealing of the objectivity of the specified correlation in the form of initiation of the way of mutual display of the Axis-Fields-Support is the essence of PA.

5. The essence of PA is carried out and revealed in the Time of the Development of Action.

<sup>15</sup> In the book “Child Psychology” D.B. Elkonin wrote: “Any new step in development of independence, in emancipation from adults is simultaneously the emergence of a new connection of the child with adults, with society”. [24, c. 16].

<sup>16</sup> See the above example of the development of modelling in the evolution of Learning Activities.

<sup>17</sup> And in some cases the catharsis that accompanied it.

<sup>18</sup> In the above examples of Mediating Actions, overcoming the implicit boundaries of the field acts as an appeal: the child’s appeal with his/her action-word to the adult (Mediator) and the child’s repetition of the adult’s praise (evaluation) [24; 19].

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