
ВОЗРАСТНАЯ ПСИХОЛОГИЯ
DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

Amplification: The Source and Tool of Development
(A Foreword by Guest Editor)

The concept of “amplification of child development” was introduced by A.V. Zaporozhets¹ in his later works. The word itself (amplification) was borrowed from the European languages, English and French, and literally means ‘expansion’. In its various meanings it is employed by a number of natural and social sciences, from genetics to linguistics. As for psychology, apart from A.V. Zaporozhets the term was used by C.G. Jung who developed the technique of amplification as part of his method of interpretation of the human mind constructs – first of all, dreams. A.V. Zaporozhets understood amplification as the ‘enrichment’ of child development, the ‘broadening’ of the child’s genetic perspective, that is, of the zone of proximal and more distant development through the specific ‘child activities’. Currently, the principle of amplification lies at the core of the Federal State Educational Standards of preschool education (2014).

The opposite of amplification then, in Zaporozhets’ opinion, is *simplification*: the reduction of the content and forms of child development, which reveals itself, for example, in forced speed or artificial acceleration. Hence the (highly relevant nowadays) Zaporozhets’ criticism of early education. This criticism may well be extended onto the modern educational trend of pursuing academic success at school. In both cases we deal with the “simple way of solving complex problems”, much too harmful as for human science, as for various practices of supporting human development.

So why does A.V. Zaporozhets, L.S. Vygotsky’s disciple and a prominent contributor of activity approach, insist on ‘amplification’ if the very introduction of the child into the human world, social and cultural, implies by definition not only the expansion and enrichment, but also the emergence of a *specific* potential of development? Throughout the education process the child – out of necessity and not because of “certain methodological restrictions” – acquires models, ‘chips’, ‘samples’ of human activity which are of local historical character and are available to the adult community of this very epoch and culture for pedagogical adaptation. As we keep saying, the adult talks to the child on behalf of the culture, or, more precisely, on behalf of the culture of his/her epoch. And it is only natural. Still, by means of these specific historical activity models the child manages to acquire the whole human way of living. More often than not, this happens quite spontaneously. There’s good reason A.V. Zaporozhets related the idea of amplification with the concept of ‘*spontaneity*’ of development which represents the cultural form just as much as the organised acquisition of activity models.

Here we are dealing with something that A.G. Asmolov called the redundancy of development². N.N. Poddyakov, an outstanding child psychologist, points out to a curious phenomenon of mother-child interaction: when talking to their small children, all mothers typically use phrases that are quite complex in their meaning and which cannot yet be fully understood by the child; however, as the time passes, the child learns to understand parts of the phrases

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¹ E.g. see: Zaporozhets A.V. Nauchnaya kontseptsiya issledovaniy NII doskolnogo vospitaniya APN SSSR [The scientific concept of research of the Institute of Prechool Education of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the USSR]. *Psikholog v detskom sadu* [Psychologist in kindergarten], 2000, no. 2–3, pp. 5–23.

² Asmolov A.G. *Optika prosveshcheniya. Sociokulturnye perspektivy* [Optics of enlightenment: socio-cultural perspectives]. Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2012.

until, finally, he is able to understand them all³. Let's imagine, just for a second, that mothers would only use simple, easy-to-understand language when communicating to the child! Needless to say, this would have resulted in the child's serious mental deficiency. Similarly, Penelope Leach, a British psychologist, recommends parents to increase the "level of complexity" in their communication with babies by showing picture books, naming surrounding objects and even describing the receipt of the meals while feeding⁴. All this creates the entire *social situation of development* within which – and only within which – the child's activity can develop.

It is worth mentioning that the means of amplification suggested by N.N. Poddyakov and P. Leach can be considered appropriate and effective only while the child is not capable of identifying and focusing on the content-related aspects of knowledge, that is, in early childhood. At preschool age this may (although not necessarily) lead to a somewhat opposite effect: simplification of child development by means of "cognitive overload". As the philosopher G.S. Batishchev puts it, activity involves both liminal and supraliminal content in which the sources of development are rooted. What to dismiss as excessive and what to preserve and maintain in any activity – that is truly the hardest change for every researcher and practitioner.

A.V. Zaporozhets' motives for introducing the concept of amplification were also connected with the obvious need for an *age-specific approach* to the study and promotion of *activity development* in ontogenesis (A.N. Leontiev, V.V. Davydov). Zaporozhets argues for a full realisation of child activities over the certain age period. However, activities are subject to historical changes (see modern discussions as to whether play has vanished from childhood or rather gained new forms), and the 21st century has already seen the emergence of several new types of activity which affect social and psychological profiles (for instance, activity on social media). Today, all these factors represent a challenge to the activity-based approach to development.

The concept of 'amplification' helps to reveal how historical limitations in human development can be eliminated in the ontogenetic perspective. It seemed to us that this concept may well be extended beyond preschool age, onto other ages, and that was the idea behind this topical issue. Our authors have created a diverse picture of the forms of development amplification (not only by educational means), from infancy to old age.

Sadly, while we were working on this issue, we suffered a great loss: Zhanna Markovna Glozman, a renowned neuropsychologist, passed away on March 4, 2022. Zhanna Markovna and her co-author, V.A. Naumova, contributed a life-asserting article on optimal ageing to this very issue, and we hoped that Zhanna Markovna would see her manuscript published. Now we would like to dedicate the whole issue to the memory of Z.M. Glozman, a wonderful scientist and person, a true advocate of psychological support to all people, young and old.

V.T. Kudryavtsev

³ Poddyakov N.N. Myshlenie doshkolnika [Thinking in preschooler]. Moscow: Pedagogika, 1977. P. 17.

⁴ Leach P. Your baby and child. Moscow: Pedagogika, 1985.