

New Requirements to Preschool Curriculum as a Guideline for Teachers Preparation

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The article is devoted to important aspects of preschool teachers preparation, which are able now to ensure development of every child. The article reviews basic principles and forms of educational work with children, which are specified in a new regulatory document. It has been pointed out that new psychological qualities arising at preschool age are of great importance for each human personality formation and are the result of development. That is why the priority task of contemporary preschool education is not acquisition of multiple knowledge and skills but promotion of holistic development, making of psychological qualities and new formations.

The author emphasizes that organization of developmental education, game as the main form of educational work with preschoolers, educational work arrangement via organization of a child's collaborative and independent activity and other principles require qualitatively new, profound psychological and pedagogical preparation for teachers.

In conclusion, it states that the new standard of higher vocational education along the lines of "Psychological and Pedagogical Education" will enable to prepare teachers for developmental preschool education based on theoretical grounds integrated with the new document, qualitatively new structure of curriculum and competences being formed in future teachers.

Keywords: development, education, activity, preschool age, standards.

Time gives an opportunity to prove once again not only theoretically but also in practice the importance and value of preschool age for human personality formation. This is testified to by both increased interest to preschool childhood problems in Russia and reforms taking place in Russian education at present: modernization processes being also

spread on the preschool stage. Specifically, the new regulatory document¹ lays the basis for the curriculum of each Russian kindergarten and sets development of every child as the main target of pedagogical work. Although the document has not been unanimously accepted and approved by the pedagogical society, it is a certain step forward in preschool education

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¹"Federal State Requirements to the Structure of Basic Comprehensive Preschool Curriculum" (2009).

evolution. Undoubtedly this is continuation of the reforms started in the late 80s of the last century and recorded in "The Concept of Preschool Upbringing" (1989). De-ideologizing and humanization ideas, their practical implementation have significantly changed Russian preschool education.

Since kindergartens were provided with the opportunity to choose the program for work with children, this fact promoted variability of curricula for preschoolers ("Childhood", "Development", "Kindergarten – Home of Joy", "The Golden Key", etc.). These were implementations of different authors' solutions to the problems of establishing optimal conditions for the child's development in preschool childhood and for arranging educational work with children of this age. Each curriculum attached special importance to the idea of development and implementation of personality-oriented teacher-child interaction. These curricula have been successfully implemented so far in Russian kindergartens. All of them are actually based on ideas of the cultural-and-historical and activity approaches (L. S. Vygotsky, A. N. Leont'ev, etc.) and the concept of amplification (A. V. Zaporozhets).

However, analysis of contemporary preschool educational practice proves the need in reforms. Research of senior preschoolers' development (I. A. Burlakova, E. O. Smirnova) has proved that children's development level is decreasing. This trend is closely connected with low game development rates. The data available now testifies that recent years have witnessed increased number of children who have difficulties in contacts with peers, and whose image thinking development is decreased. A great deal of preschoolers demonstrated low arbitrariness development rates. No doubt that such outcomes cause worry as they testify to troubles in the child's development. The reason for such situation is that there is actually no time for playing games in the kindergarten – games being the leading preschoolers' activity. Tacit escape from the curriculum to be implemented is observed everywhere, and concentrated children's preparation for school is performed to the detriment of not only game but also of other child-specific activities. Personality-oriented in-

teraction quite often remains a slogan: learning that is more often undertaken according to the school model becomes the basic form of children's life at the kindergarten. Adult-children interaction acquires authoritarian character under such model, it is aimed at learning instructional material, children's interests being disregarded. The learning tasks do not include development of the child's individuality, his activity and initiative, and creative abilities.

Requirements to the program structure shaped up in the new document preserve variability and determine important principles, based on which it is necessary to reform in fact educational work with preschoolers with the view of developing every child. Obligation to adhere to these principles gives some guarantee that important provisions of preschool pedagogy and developmental psychology will pass from the declarations category to the guide for action.

The new document again draws attention of psychological and pedagogical society to the ideas of L. S. Vygotsky and A. V. Zaporozhets about specificity of preschoolers' education. Numerous researches have acknowledged and proved the following:

- The child's snowballing development takes place at preschool age;
- Psychological qualities important to personality development are formed during this period of childhood;
- Development at this time is not spontaneous but is determined by conditions of life and education.

Specificity of such education was emphasized by L. S. Vygotsky, who wrote: "preschool education differs significantly from school education" [1, p.383]. It takes place during the child's contact with adults, familiarization with the world of nature and things around, in the course of learning child-specific activities.

"<...>learning at this age is of a peculiar nature. It happens not in the form of purposeful educational activity, like that of a schoolchild, but in the course of ingenuous acquaintance with the world around, active contacts with adults, various kinds of specific preschool games and occupations," wrote A. V. Zaporozhets [2].

Principles of educational activity arrangement set forth in new federal requirements are aimed at practical implementation of domestic psychology and pedagogy provisions about development-education correlation, preschoolers' education specificity, which have become topical again. According to the new document, the curriculum for kindergarten, which defines both contents and arrangement of educational process, should be in line with these principles.

The "developmental education principle" can be named as one of central principles, according to which the main aim of educational work with preschoolers is proclaimed to be the child's development. The child's development is considered as a complicated process that does not come down to abilities and knowledge assimilation. The process should result in the qualities enabling the child to be independent, initiative and successful in his activity. Full-fledged development becomes possible if education is based on children's interaction with adults and peers and on interested children's learning of activities in conformity with the given period of life (games, drawing, construction, etc.). Another, no less important principle – combination of scientific validity and practical applicability – draws teachers' attention to basic provisions and achievements of psychological and pedagogical sciences and emphasizes those among them, which can be used in preschool practice. S. G. Yakobson, one of the authors of a widely reputed program, wrote about inadmissibility of "including controversial items into a mass curriculum" [7]. It is essential that the preschool curriculum included scrutinized and proved materials. The following educational results of the curriculum should be assigned: the new formations, conditions and development mechanisms of which are known if not fully but at least to a large extent.

Principles the curriculum should be based on are as follows: integration of educational areas and the complex-thematic principle of pedagogical process. A. V. Zaporozhets wrote about the same stating that "integrated approach to upbringing can not be executed with the help of a sum of individual pedagogical methods and techniques. This approach re-

quires <...> proper organization of the entire children's life and activity" [2]. It seems that implementation of these principles will enable teachers to make a child's life holistic and harmonious instead of being made up of separate classes. It will also assign a specific meaning to fulfillment of training tasks by the children.

It is worth making special note of the principles similar in meaning and relevance that determine forms of working with children and the place of educational work in children's life at the kindergarten. Namely, preschoolers' upbringing and training is performed constantly – when the child is drawing or modeling, is constructing out of bricks or listening to a fairy-tale, when (s)he is preparing for a walk or is having breakfast, etc. It is important to avoid adults dictating to children, so that the adult established interaction and cooperation with children and between children during various activities. As pointed out above, special attention is paid to game – as the leading activity at this age, in which psychological new formations are germinated.

All these principles emphasize specificity of preschool education. The child's education and upbringing take place at each point of the child's activity, when the child is contacting or interacting with adults or peers, when he is independently busy with some activity, when he is preparing for a walk or is washing his hands, etc. – and they determine the child's development. This peculiarity of preschool education was also described by L. S. Vygotsky:

"Even when the child learns names of objects around during the period of first questions, he, as a matter of fact, is taking a certain education cycle" [1, p. 383].

As for the forms of preschool work, these should be primarily game and other activities adequate to the age – communicative, cognitive-exploratory, productive activities, reading, etc. This proposition that corresponds to the activity approach and consolidates game priority in preschoolers' educational work seems important and rather meaningful.

It is worth noting that time for solving educational tasks by the teacher includes arrangement of children's activities, routine organization and interaction with the child's family. It is

important that the teacher will also need to create conditions for children's independent activity. This will specifically promote real child's development.

A. V. Zaporozhets wrote about necessity of such changes:

"Proceeding from very important provisions set forward by Soviet psychology and pedagogy as regards to social and historical origin of various kinds of child's activity, we elaborated intensive methods for formation of these activities with children, which is a significant achievement of domestic preschool pedagogy. Due to that, in preschool education theory and practice, a trend appeared for over-regulating children's activity and suppressing their initiative, which significantly decreased efficiency of pedagogical process. It is necessary to more carefully study conditions and forms of pedagogical influence, which are favorable to transformation of the child's activity (initially taking shape under adults' influence) into independent activity, into real self-activity, because this is the only way to create most favorable prerequisites for free comprehensive development of the child" [2].

It is amazing that the words said in 1980 are still urgent in the XXIst century.

In compliance with the new document, the kindergarten curriculum should be aimed at "formation of general culture, development of physical, intellectual and personality qualities and traits, formation of educational activity prerequisites that ensure social successfulness, preservation and reinforcement of preschoolers' health" [6]. All-round children education, according to federal requirements, is ensured by the curriculum contents that includes the whole set of educational areas. The outcome of the curriculum adoption will be the child's integrative qualities stipulated in the document. However, any curriculum is put into life by teachers. Nevertheless, teachers' preparation has not undergone any significant changes up to date.

The Federal Program for Russian Education Development (2005) points out the necessity to prepare specialists at a different level, who "know how to work with education and development processes, who are familiar with

methods of registration of their own original techniques and technologies, who are able to introspect their own pedagogical thinking activity, who know how to work with participants to educational process at any age and social-and-psychological status" [4]. This proposition fully determines general view on professional and cultural qualities each teacher should possess. Besides, federal requirements increase requirements to preschool teacher's competences and impart psychological and pedagogical character to the teacher's work.

The situation is unique now. Modernization has affected the entire education system – from the preschool stage to the higher vocational school. There appeared an opportunity to elaborate such curricula that would prepare skilled teachers, who are able to efficiently and competently solve tasks of developmental preschoolers' education. The approved state standard of higher vocational training developed at the Moscow State University of Psychology and Education in the area of "Psychological and Pedagogical Education" makes such implementation possible. The action approach makes theoretical basis for standard development, the approach enables developers to single out professional tasks and competences necessary to solve them based on the teacher's activity analysis.

Within this area, programs were elaborated to prepare bachelors and masters for work with preschoolers. Future teachers competent in developmental education will get fundamentally different psychological preparation that allows them to "see" and to understand every child, the changes the child is undergoing as a result of educational work, to understand the role of activity in preschoolers' development. They will be able to "deal with children's problems and childhood in whole, applying activity technologies to arrange joint adult-children work and independent children's activity" [3].

Formation of competencies that enable to solve these tasks is ensured, for example, via mastering program modules such as "Theoretical and Experimental Foundations of Psychological and Pedagogical Activity", "Psychology and Pedagogy of Children Development" and "Psychological and Pedago-

gical Activity Methodology and Techniques". Basic training courses are mastered by future preschool education teachers together with educational psychologists, future primary school teachers. As a result of studying disciplines included in these modules, the learners will:

- "Know – peculiarities of psychic setup structure and patterns of its development in onto- and phylogenesis; educational process patterns, developmental functions of teaching and upbringing; developmental variations under different kinds of dysontogenesis; structural and dynamic characteristics of a small group;
- Be able to – interact with children and adolescents; to apply recommended methods and techniques to arranging children's joint and individual activity; to apply knowledge of individual learners' and pupils' peculiarities in educational process;
- Be equipped with – research methods in the area of pedagogy and psychology; contemporary teaching technologies; specific methods for psychological and pedagogical diagnostics" [5].

Each module combines classroom disciplines intended to form common psychological and pedagogical competencies (for example, pedagogical psychology) and those disciplines

that are necessary to solve professional tasks in preschool education (for example, psychology and pedagogy of game). Mastering of educational contents will allow the teacher to understand a preschooler child and to take into account his interests in the course of teaching and upbringing, to know well the main development pattern in preschool childhood and to establish psychological and pedagogical conditions necessary for this development.

The Bachelors' and Master's program implementation will enable, on top of that, to stimulate personality and professional growth and to reveal teachers' creative potential and educational capabilities.

Curricular in the area of "Psychological and Pedagogical Education" enable to prepare teachers who possess all required competencies to implement developmental preschool programs in accordance with each child's needs.

Common theoretical grounds for preschool program requirements and higher vocational training standards in the area of "Psychological and Pedagogical Education" make them interconnected. This is the most important condition "under which we can consider the higher vocational training (HVT) standard as socio-cultural technology for modernization of education" [3].

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