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PSYCHOLOGY OF DEVELOPING THINKING IN PRESCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

Oripova Munisa Shamsiddinovna
Head of the Preschool Education Coordination Department
Surkhandarya Regional Center for Pedagogical Excellence

Abstract:
There are several key factors in developing the thinking skills of preschool children. This article analyzes the main factors influencing the formation and development of children's thinking, such as games, creative activities, experiences, and environmental influences. Additionally, it highlights the importance of speech, emotional environment, and interactive approaches in stimulating children's thought processes.

Keywords: Preschool age, thinking, development, play, creativity, experience, environment, speech, interactive approach, emotional environment.

Introduction

The development of thinking in preschool children is one of the key research areas in psychology and pedagogy. Thinking is a fundamental cognitive function of human consciousness that includes understanding, analyzing, and drawing conclusions about reality. Studying the mechanisms of thinking development in children, identifying its psychological aspects, and determining influencing factors play a crucial role in ensuring children's overall intellectual progress.

Psychology considers thinking as one of the highest forms of human activity, which develops through different stages.

Scholars such as L.S. Vygotsky (1983), J. Piaget (1951), and A.N. Leontiev (1972) emphasized the gradual development of thinking in preschool children. Piaget (1951) identified different stages of cognitive development, stating that preschool children primarily fall into the "preoperational stage," where they rely on visual and intuitive thinking rather than logical reasoning.

According to L.S. Vygotsky (1983), the theory of the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) plays a crucial role in children's thinking development. He

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argued that social interaction with adults and peers is one of the main factors influencing cognitive growth.

Stages of Thinking Development in Preschool Children

Preschool children's thinking manifests in the following stages:

1. Practical-manipulative thinking (2-3 years old): Children solve problems through object manipulation. For example, when building a tower with blocks, they learn about balance.
2. Visual-imaginative thinking (3-5 years old): Children develop the ability to visualize and process images. For instance, reading fairy tales and looking at picture books enhance their imagination.
3. Verbal-logical thinking (5-7 years old): Children start understanding cause-and-effect relationships and expressing their thoughts logically. They begin to comprehend object relationships and generalize concepts.

Factors Influencing the Development of Thinking in Preschool Children

1. Family Environment and Upbringing

Parents play a crucial role as the first educators of their children. Communication within the family, reading books, asking questions, and encouraging independent thinking significantly contribute to cognitive development. Parents should engage in constant dialogue with their children and inspire them to seek new knowledge.

2. Games and Interactive Activities

Play is a natural way for children to develop their thinking and understand the world. Construction games, puzzles, role-playing games (e.g., "doctor-patient" or "shopkeeper-customer") help expand children's imagination and foster creative thinking.

3. Exploring the Environment and Nature

Direct interaction with nature enhances children's observational skills and contributes to cognitive development. Outdoor walks, explanations of natural phenomena, and discussions about plants and animals help strengthen logical thinking.

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4. Reading Books and Listening to Fairy Tales

Reading books and telling fairy tales enrich children's imagination, help them understand story sequences, and develop problem-solving skills. Fairy tales also introduce moral values and critical thinking.

5. Questioning and Developing Critical Thinking

Asking children questions and encouraging them to respond fosters independent thinking. Questions like "Why?", "How?", and "What if?" stimulate their critical thinking and reasoning abilities.

6. Art and Creative Activities

Drawing, crafting, playing with clay, listening to and performing music—all these activities enhance children's creative thinking. They also help children express emotions and expand their imagination.

7. Interactive Technologies and Educational Programs

Modern educational apps and interactive games can serve as effective tools for cognitive development. However, their usage should be balanced to ensure that children also engage with the natural environment and social interactions.

Scientific Foundations of Thinking Development

This section can explore recent research and scientific sources related to children's cognitive development. In addition to Piaget and Vygotsky’s theories, modern neuropsychological and cognitive science studies can be discussed.

Methods for Developing Thinking in Preschool Children

This section can highlight innovative pedagogical techniques, new educational methods, STEM education (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics), and creative approaches. The significance of Montessori, Reggio Emilia, and Waldorf education methods in fostering thinking development can also be explored.

The Role of Communication and Social Environment in Thinking Development

This part can analyze how social experiences, peer interactions, and communication with adults contribute to cognitive development. Group activities,

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interactive games, and social interactions help children enhance logical, critical, and creative thinking skills.

Professional and Pedagogical Training

The role of preschool educators in developing children's thinking skills and the importance of teacher training can be discussed. Information on specialized training programs, professional development courses, and innovative teaching approaches can be provided.

The Role of Technology in Thinking Development

Interactive technologies, mobile applications, robotics, and virtual reality have become new educational tools for preschool children. This section can analyze their positive and negative impacts on children's thinking skills.

Parental Recommendations for Developing Children's Thinking

Parents can use the following strategies at home to foster their child's thinking skills:

- Encouraging free expression of thoughts and ideas
- Promoting logical and critical thinking in daily activities
- Organizing interactive and creative activities
- Developing a culture of reading and discussion

Conclusion

The development of thinking in preschool children requires cooperation between families, educational institutions, and society. It is essential to provide children with continuous learning opportunities, encourage independent thinking, and support their creative abilities. Strong thinking skills serve as a foundation for children's future academic success and personal growth.

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