

Subjective Activity of Preschoolers as the Main Objective of the “Child-Teacher-Parents” Triad

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Abstract

Abstract. The article presents the results of diagnosing the formation of preschoolers' subjective activity, teachers' professional activities affecting its level and the participation of parents in joint activities aimed at the development of children's subjective activity. The development of the latter is one of the components of the child's social formation, i.e. a complex phenomenon during which children acquire norms of human society and assert themselves as social subjects. The authors of the article have developed and tested an array of methods entitled “Psychological and pedagogical monitoring of educational activities aimed to develop the subjective activity of preschoolers”. If directors and teachers of preschool education institutions introduce the above-mentioned methods, they will be able to obtain the data necessary for planning and implementing the educational process aimed at the development of children's subjective activity in preschool education institutions. The study is based on three methodological approaches: axiological, activity-based and qualimetric.

Keywords: preschoolers, preschool education, initiative, subjective activity.

1. Introduction

The organization of preschool education in the Russian Federation should be an organic component of educational activities in education systems of different levels, which is emphasized in the Federal Law No. 273-FZ “On Education in the Russian Federation” (2012). Preschool education should consider individual characteristics of each child and make them active subjects of education who can independently choose its content. Modern researchers define the subjective position of an individual as the active, purposeful and constructive position of a person in everyday life and prospective development. In practice, this position characterizes a person as an independent and creative individual capable of initiating activities.

The problem of developing the subjective activity of preschoolers is relevant due to the implementation of the state educational policy which obliges each educational institution to form a common culture of the child’s personality, including such qualities as initiative, self-sufficiency, etc. (Decree of the Minister of Education and Science No 1155, 2013.).

Nowadays, scholars pay more attention to the subjectivity of preschool children. This problem is actively studied by N.E. Veraksa (2011), A.G. Gogoberidze (2009), V.A. Derkunskeya (2010), N.B. Krylova (1995), V.T. Kudryavtsev (2001), V.I. Slobodchikov (2013), etc. The subject understanding is associated with endowing an individual with the following traits: activity, initiative, self-sufficiency and creativity.

According to the theories of J. Piaget (1945; 1958), E. Erickson (1993) and L.S. Vygotsky (1978), children are actively learning, acquiring information about the world through games, they are individuals who develop at their own pace (1999).

Modern educators and psychologists indicate the need for the purpose-oriented development of a child in accordance with the humanistic orientation of education where functional acquisitions of children are not a goal in themselves but a means of developing their subjectivity, and children are not considered as subjects of pedagogical influence but active human beings self-determining in a social culture (Golovanova, 2004; Nezhnov, 2007). A subjective activity represents personal traits that mostly contribute to the development of potential abilities. In addition, sociocultural characteristics of society and multidimensional educational tools implementing this process greatly influence the formation of the individual’s subjective activity (R.M. Chumicheva (2005), L.V. Kolomiychenko (2015), etc.).

The effective social development of each child is predetermined by the timely and high-quality monitoring of their activities, certain objectives

and methods of training and education with due regard to age and gender characteristics (Hansen, Kaufmann, Saifer, 1997).

At the same time, the development of such qualities as a subjective activity, initiative and self-sufficiency is characterized by a range of methodological and practical problems that hinder monitoring or make it ineffective. It was one of the factors of introducing diagnostics in activities of preschool education institutions.

Children are the main focus of preschool education institutions. Their education and upbringing should not be based on a comparison of the child's real level of development with the prescriptive norm but rather proceed from the actual level of psycho-physiological development. The pace and scope of advancement from a personal starting level to a new one is the child's own achievement. A universal task is to study the individual characteristics of each child tracking the results and achievements of their activities. It is also necessary to monitor the attitude of parents to the problem under study (Kirienko, Konysheva, 2007).

The organization of educational activities in preschool education institutions implies the monitoring of the process, current and final results of the child's development. The methodological training of teachers and their professional skills directly affect the effectiveness of educational activities in preschool education institutions. To determine this impact, it is necessary to fix the initial and final level of the teacher's knowledge, as well as the level of their pedagogical skills.

It should be noted that preschool education institutions need to develop a diagnostic system since redundant, insufficient and biased information often does not allow making adequate decisions that correspond to the real state of affairs in the pedagogical system of such institutions or conduct an objective assessment of its functioning and development.

We have analytically decomposed the holistic process of interaction among the subjects (children – teachers – children), determined the current level of the child's psycho-physiological development in the beginning of such a pedagogical interaction and set the task of ensuring an individual learning path for preschoolers within the framework of the established pedagogical diagnostics system as the basis for the implementation of this path using adequate methodological tools.

The article aims to study the diagnostic system aimed at identifying common patterns in the development of the child's subjective activity; the teacher's professional activity in the development of the child's subjective activity; the participation of parents in this process for the following plan-

ning and organization of the educational process.

The methodological basis of the study consists of the systematic, activity-based and qualimetric approaches.

The systematic approach (I.V. Blauberger (1973), B.S. Gershunskii (1998), Yu.A. Konarzhevskii (1990), A.I. Uemov (1978), etc.) considered the formation of the child's subjective activity within the framework of the "child – teacher – parents" pedagogical triad.

The activity-based approach (P.Ya. Galperin (1999), V.V. Davydov (1998), A.N. Leontev (1975), etc.) determined the nature of interactions among participants of the educational process.

The qualimetric approach (V.P. Bepalko (1977), I.Ya. Lerner (1981), E.V. Yakovlev (1999), etc.) combined the results of diagnosing participants of the educational process and established the correlation dependence among them.

2. Materials and methods

To implement the study objectives, we diagnosed the subjective activity of preschoolers; professional activities of teachers aimed at the development of children's subjective activity; the participation of parents in joint activities for developing the subjective activity of their children. The study involved 17 preschool education institutions of the Chelyabinsk Region. The total number of study participants was 3,349 people, including 1,615 children from three to seven years old, 1,479 parents and 255 teachers.

We used the following groups of methods: empirical (discussion, interviewing, questioning, testing), interpretational (quantitative and qualitative analysis, mathematical processing of diagnostic results).

Throughout the study, we also applied such methods as:

1) The diagnostics of components revealing the development of the child's subjective activity: diagnostic questionnaires and surveys for monitoring the activity of children (Volkov, Volkova, 1994);

2) The diagnostics of factors determining the development of the child's subjective activity: the diagnostics of the psychological background influencing the development of children (observation during free independent activity) (Polyakova, 2011), the diagnostics of teachers' professional competences forming the social development of preschool children (R.V. Ovcharova's "Style of pedagogical communication" (Ovcharova, 2003); M. Rokich's methodology "Axiological orientations" (Rokich, 1973). A.A. Rean's methodology "The study of motivation and fear of failure" (Rean, 1999); the methodology "Psychological climate in a team" (A.F.

Fiedler's methodology "Assessments of the psychological atmosphere in collectives") (Fetiskin, Kozlov, Manuilov, 2002); the diagnostics of parents' competences forming the social development of children (I.M. Markovskaya's technique "Parents and child interaction" (Marovskaya, 2005)).

3. Results and discussion

N.A. Korotkova and P.G. Nezhnov (2007, 2014) based their regulatory schedule of preschoolers' development on two determinants. The first one considers integral indicators of preschoolers' development (namely, intellectual, motivational and dynamic characteristics of activity). There is a transition from the situational determinative conditioned by the surrounding substantive field and procedural motivation typical of a three-year-old child to the formation of ideas and goals, i.e. conscious intentions to do something regardless of the existing environment and the probability of their realization. This process is followed by a transition to sufficiently formulated goals and objectives (conscious intentions embodied in the form of correlative results), i.e. the replacement of procedural motivation with result-oriented motivation. Thus, qualitative changes in the development of preschoolers can be presented on the following three levels:

The first level is situational connectedness with the existing substantive field and procedural motivation;

The second level is the formation of an idea that does not depend on the existing objective situation, with partially preserved procedural motivation (the instability of such an idea, the lack of desire to achieve a certain result);

The third level is a well-formed idea or goal embodied in motivation to achieve a certain result.

The second determinant forming the regulatory schedule of development considers increasing subjective activity. The child's initiative is among external manifestations of subjective activity. The basis for determining attributes of initiative is motivational and informative characteristics of activity, i.e. the actual substantive orientation of the child's activity. The above-mentioned attributes of initiative are as follows:

□ Creative initiative (inclusion into role-playing games as the main creative activity of children developing their imagination and creative thinking);

□ Initiative as goal-setting and a volitional effort (inclusion into different types of productive activities: drawing, molding or designing requiring certain efforts to overcome the "resistance" of material, and develop-

ing random attention and the planning function of speech);

□ Communicative initiative (inclusion of children into interaction with peers developing the communicative function of speech);

□ Cognitive initiative, i.e. curiosity (inclusion into experimentation and cognitive-research activity to help children establish spatiotemporal, cause-effect and genus-type relationships).

While studying the development of the subjective activity of preschoolers, we reached the following conclusions.

We dwelled on the “Creative initiative” indicator. 44% of younger preschoolers are characterized by a high level of creative initiative, which indicates that these children can actively deploy several related conditional actions and alternately use substitute objects in a conventional meaning. 34% of younger preschoolers rarely use substitute objects and do not always deploy conditional and relating actions. 22% of children do not show creative initiative and do not allocate objects with different situation-related meanings.

Only 5% of children belonging to the middle preschool age have a fairly developed creative initiative, i.e. they take on different roles in role-playing games and always complement conditional actions with role-related speech. 10% of middle-aged preschoolers rarely develop individual episodes and move from one game role to another. 85% of this age group have a low level of creative initiative (according to the observation of role-playing games), which indicates that most of them do not know how to modify the existing game situation, do not accept or designate playing roles in speech. Since role-playing games are the main child’s activity it can be argued that the development of initiative of most middle-aged preschoolers does not correspond to the age norm.

38% of children belonging to the older preschool group have a well-formed creative initiative and 62% of them have a low level of its development. These indicators demonstrate the prevailing trend of an underdeveloped creative initiative, which is a negative factor.

Children at the age of six-seven years do not have a high level of creative initiative, only 6% of children have a medium level, and 94% of children do not show creative initiative, combine different episodes into a connected sequence, embody the game concept in some product and do not verbally comment on the game through events and space. All the above-mentioned indicates a continuing negative trend.

Considering the indicator “Initiative as goal-setting and a volitional effort”, we came to the following conclusions during the observation of chil-

dren in productive activities.

Most young preschoolers (55%) have a medium level of this indicator, i.e. children try to engage in the activity. 39% of children have a high level of the above-mentioned indicator, they are keen on designing and can complete the process if they have sufficient materials. 6% of children do not show any initiative in productive activity, work with the given material or designate the process of the activity.

Children at the age of four-five years reveal a negative trend in the development of initiative as goal-setting and a volitional effort. There are no preschoolers from this age group with a high level of initiative as goal-setting and a volitional effort. 30% of children have a medium level of this indicator, i.e. children rarely set a specific goal of their activities and do not always fix the final result. 70% of children have an underdeveloped initiative in productive activity, i.e. they do not have a specific intention or goal of their activities and do not know how to work with limited material. This negative trend preserves in the group of older preschoolers. 85% of children at the age of five-six years set a specific goal of their activities but do not try to achieve it during classes. They fix the final result but rarely strive to achieve good quality. As a rule, they do not return to interrupted tasks. 31% of children have a high level of initiative as goal-setting and a volitional effort, i.e. a third of children show a tendency to achieve goals and good quality in the course of their activities.

This negative trend continues at preschool age. 71% of children have a low level of initiative as goal-setting and a volitional effort, which hinders the development of voluntary behavior and emotional-volitional sphere, as well as negatively affects children's readiness for school and causes difficulties during the adaptation period in this educational institution. 26% of children have a medium level of this indicator, namely, they have a specific intention-goal in activities but they rarely strive for it and do not complete the task started.

Analyzing the indicator "Communicative initiative", we reached the following conclusions in the process of monitoring the joint activities of children. 44% of preschoolers have a high level of communicative initiative, i.e. these children attract the attention of peers to their actions (the latter act as active observers) and try to play together with them. However, 17% of children do not take a communicative initiative. In general, 70% of preschoolers have a low level of communication initiative. This negative trend prevails for older preschoolers.

Considering the indicator "Cognitive initiative", we monitored cogni-

tive-research and productive activities of children and concluded the following: 22% of younger preschoolers have a high level of cognitive initiative, i.e. they are interested in new subjects, actively explore things and discover their capabilities. 61% of children have a medium level of cognitive initiative, i.e. most children of this age are selective in relation to new subjects in their environment, rarely examine things, do not tend to repeat actions with objects. 17% of younger preschoolers have a low level of cognitive initiative. These children do not show any interest in new objects and rarely manipulate them.

Only 5% of children belonging to the middle preschool age have a high level of cognitive initiative. 70% of children of this age rarely have any conscious intention to learn something about specific things and phenomena, are limited to simple manipulation of objects, do not express assumptions about the connection between actions and possible effects during the study of new subjects, i.e. they also have a low level of cognitive initiative. 25% of children have a medium level of cognitive initiative, i.e. they correspond to age-related indicators.

35% of older preschoolers have a high level of this indicator, they are capable of simple reasoning, show interest in graphic schemes, carry out variable actions in relation to the objects under study. 65% of older preschoolers have a low level of cognitive initiative, i.e. most of them are interested in characteristics and properties of specific things, do not ask questions about abstract things, rarely try to realize their new ideas in game plots, themes of drawing and design.

There are no preschool children with a high level of cognitive initiative. 24% of them have a medium level of this indicator, i.e. children tend to streamline and systematize specific materials. Sometimes they are interested in cognitive literature. 76% of children have a low level of cognitive initiative, i.e. most of them do not show interest in symbolic languages, do not implement graphic schemes, rarely strive to explain a number of facts. Summarizing the above, we concluded that the functioning of preschool education institutions aimed at the development of the child's subjective activity demonstrates results that cannot meet requirements of the Federal State Educational Standard for Preschool Education (Decree of the Minister of Education and Science No 1155, 2013), which determines the need to develop a theoretical and methodological basis for the formation of the subjective activity of preschoolers in the conditions of preschool education institutions, which will be the subject of future scientific research.

The effective formation of the subjective activity of preschoolers is de-

terminated by the level of teachers’ methodological training, the level of formation of their pedagogical skills and professionalism.

We determined indicators of the readiness of teachers in preschool education institutions to develop children’s subjective activity, including motivation, professional competence, style of pedagogical communication, interaction with children, an individual approach forming objective-spatial environment, strategies of meaningful learning, planning and evaluating, the use of health-saving technologies, interaction with families of students, professional self-development.

The diagnostic results are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The diagnostics of teachers (%)

Indicator \ Level	Low	Medium	High
Motivation	-	16.7	83.3
Professional competence	-	24	76
Style of pedagogical communication	-	16.7	83.3
Interaction with children	12	50	38
Individual approach	-	62	38
Developing objective-spatial environment	-	50	50
Strategies of meaningful learning	12	60	28
Planning and evaluating	17	50	33
Use of health-saving technologies	-	17	83
Interaction with families of students	33	45	22
Professional self-development	28	44	28

The diagnostics of teachers’ professional activity aimed at the development of the child’s subjective activity demonstrates that most teachers (83.3%) have effective motivation, and only 16.7% are characterized by a medium level of motivation. 76% of teachers know conceptual frameworks and have well-formed professional skills in the field of social and communicative development of children, while 24% have a medium level of this competence. Teachers of preschool education institutions prefer the democratic style of pedagogical communication (83.3%), but 16.7% of teachers have a tendency towards the authoritarian style. While observing the professional activity of the respondents, we noticed that the number

of authoritarian teachers was slightly bigger. This tendency indicates that some teachers know the pros of the democratic style of pedagogical communication but choose not to use it in their interaction with children.

In addition, we analyzed activities of teachers in conformity with such indicators as the ability to implement an individual approach to the child, to create a safe and developing objective-spatial environment, to apply health-saving technologies in their practice. This analysis demonstrated that most teachers have high and medium levels of these indicators.

Most teachers showed a medium level of the following indicators: “interaction with children”, “strategies of meaningful learning”, “planning and evaluating” and “interaction with the families of their students”. A large part of teachers (33%) lack professional skills concerning the last indicator. 12% of teachers showed a low level of the indicator “interaction with children” which should be expressed in the effective use of functional roles in the educational process and the opportunity for children to be responsible for their own activities with due regard to their individual needs. 12% of teachers also demonstrated a low level of “the strategy meaningful learning” that involves the selection and use of effective methods and techniques facilitating the individual development and social cooperation of children, as well as the ability to develop a child in typical scenarios and different life situations. 17% of teachers showed a low level of the indicator “planning and evaluating” which is conveyed by the formation of plans reflecting a comprehensive approach to interaction with children with due regard to their individual needs and abilities.

While analyzing the formation of the subjective activity of preschoolers, it is necessary to emphasize the relevant functioning of the “teacher – child – parents” pedagogical triad. The social institution of the family plays a crucial role in this triad. Its role cannot be compensated by other socialization agents and educational organizations for infants and young children (Evans, Myers, Ilfeld, 2000; Young, 2002). This social institution is important for children to acquire social norms. Family forms the child’s fundamental axiological orientations in the sphere of social and interpersonal relations, as well as personal traits, including subjective activity. In this regard, the interaction between teachers and parents acquires special significance (Jansen, 1995; Junge, 1998; Lipp-Peetz, 1991; Textor, 2001). The diagnostics of parental involvement in joint activities aimed at the development of the child’s subjective activity has proved that parents understand the need for joint work forming the subjective activity of preschool children, while the system of interaction used in preschool education in-

stitutions helps establish subject-subject relations between teachers and parents.

According to the monitoring results, there is a larger number of parents (64%) with an underdeveloped competence regarding the subjective activity of children. Most parents (67%) acknowledged they have insufficient proficiency in the sphere of methodological tools, tactics and methods of effective pedagogical communication with children aimed at the formation of subjective activity.

Only 32% of parents considered they had skills of interaction with children contributing to the development of their subjective activity.

In addition, about a half of the total number of the respondents (68%) participating in the monitoring demonstrated a passive attitude towards interaction with preschool education institutions in order to develop the child's subjective activity.

Based on the foregoing, we can state that most parents are generally willing to cooperate in the development of the child's subjective activity but do not have sufficient knowledge in this matter and methodological tools for implementing this process.

4. Conclusion

The novelty of this research lies in the compilation of different methodologies for determining the development of the subjective activity of preschool children, which implies not only the direct diagnostics of children but also the compulsory diagnostics of teachers' professional activities and participation of parents in joint activities aimed at forming children's subjective activity.

Based on the diagnostics conducted, we have concluded as follows:

□ Throughout preschool education, the development of subjective activity has a progressive but uneven and contradictory nature;

□ The diagnostics of teachers demonstrated the need to improve their competence in the following directions: "interaction with children", "strategies for meaningful learning", "planning and evaluating" and "interaction with children's families" (33% of the respondents have a low level of interacting with children's families);

□ The diagnostics of parents revealed that its results cannot be positively evaluated (68% of parents show a passive attitude towards the formation of children's subjective activity);

□ The comparison of teachers and parents' involvement suggested that their attitudes can correlate with each other since the inability of

teachers to interact with families of their students for the formation of subjective activity leads to a low level of parents' competences in this matter;

□ The insufficient formation of children's subjective activity is caused by the lack of harmonious interaction between teachers of preschool education institutions and families of students;

□ The study highlighted the need for an integrated structural-functional model forming the subjective activity of preschoolers that ensures the effective interaction of all participants of the pedagogical triad with equal success.

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