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DEVELOPMENT OF VISUAL-IMAGINAL THINKING IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN THROUGH ORGANIZED ACTIVITIES IN DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the pedagogical and psychological foundations of effectively organizing the activities of development centers in fostering visual-imaginal thinking in preschool children. It also examines the methodological possibilities for organizing educational activities within development centers and develops practical recommendations based on the scientific views of both foreign and local scholars. The research findings indicate that development centers constitute an effective pedagogical environment for enhancing the imaginal form of thinking in children.

Keywords: Development Centers, Visual-Imaginal Thinking, Preschool Education, Game-Based Technology, Cognitive Development, Pedagogical Environment.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the modernization of the preschool education system in Uzbekistan has become a priority area of state policy. A number of regulatory and legal documents aimed at improving the quality of preschool education and developing children's intellectual and creative potential have been adopted.

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The Law “On Preschool Education and Upbringing” defines the comprehensive development of preschool children, as well as the formation of their thinking, imagination, and creative abilities, as key objectives of the educational process. Furthermore, the State Preschool Education Standard emphasizes the development of children's cognitive processes, particularly visual–imaginal thinking, as one of the essential competencies.

Modern pedagogical approaches consider it crucial to shift from centralized instructional sessions to a child-centered developmental environment. From this perspective, development centers are regarded as one of the most effective pedagogical spaces for fostering children's independent activity, imagination, figurative thinking, and creative cognition.

Today, the development of visual–imaginal thinking, which precedes abstract thinking, is considered a fundamental prerequisite for school readiness.

The issue of visual–imaginal thinking has been widely studied in psychology and pedagogy. Lev Vygotsky associated cognitive development with the social environment and substantiated that a child’s cognitive activity is formed through active engagement. According to him, children acquire imaginal thinking through practical interaction with objects.

Jean Piaget divided children's cognitive development into stages and defined preschool age as the period of “preoperational thinking,” during which children think through images of real objects.

Alexei Leontiev emphasized in his activity theory that thinking develops through active engagement. The richer a child's object-based activity, the more advanced their thinking becomes.

Daniil Elkonin and Vasily Davydov identified play as the leading activity of preschool age and scientifically substantiated that role-playing games significantly contribute to the development of imaginal thinking.

Among local scholars, Sh.A. Abdullayeva, N.M. Kayumova, R.M. Qodirova, and M. Ochilov have explored the creation of developmental environments in

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preschool education and the enhancement of children's thinking through activity centers.

Research indicates that, compared to traditional frontal instruction, development centers significantly enhance children's:

- independent thinking;
- imagination;
- visual–imaginal thinking;
- creativity.

Pedagogical Potential of Development Centers

Development centers are educational environments organized according to children's interests and needs. They ensure free choice, active experimentation, object-based activity, visual perception, and social interaction.

Visual–imaginal thinking develops specifically through objects, models, pictures, and role-based situations. The following approaches are recommended for fostering visual–imaginal thinking within development centers:

- 1. Enrichment of the visual environment** – using real objects, models, didactic cards, and construction sets to stimulate imagination.
- 2. Application of play technologies** – role-playing games such as “Shop,” “Hospital,” and “Builder,” which promote imaginal thinking.
- 3. Integrative activities** – combining several areas within one activity, such as drawing, storytelling, and construction.
- 4. Creating problem situations** – for example, the teacher builds a tower from wooden blocks and gradually removes several blocks until it collapses, then asks: “Why did the tower fall?” Instead of providing ready-made answers, the teacher encourages children to identify the cause through visual reasoning.
- 5. Organization of sensory experiences** – sand play, water experiments, and color mixing, which form the imaginal basis of thinking.

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In development centers, the teacher should act as a facilitator, observer, and motivator, prioritizing cooperation over control.

Proper organization of activities in development centers serves as an effective pedagogical tool for fostering visual–imaginal thinking in preschool children.

The research findings demonstrate that:

- a developmental environment accelerates cognitive growth;
- play activity is the primary mechanism of imaginal thinking;
- visual tools ensure conscious knowledge acquisition;
- independent activity enhances creative thinking.

Development centers, as an innovative model of modern preschool education, provide effective preparation for formal schooling.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, high results can be achieved by improving the methods and methodological approaches for the effective use of each development center in fostering visual–imaginal thinking in preschool children. Therefore, the methodologies aimed at organizing development centers on the basis of clear objectives and a systematic approach, as recommended above, can serve as effective tools in this field.

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