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PAPER

THE ROLE OF COGNITIVE SKILLS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF OLDER PRESCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

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Abstract

This article emphasizes the specific importance of developing cognitive skills in older preschool-aged children. It highlights how the development of cognitive abilities in preschool education influences the formation of essential developmental processes in children and determines the role of cognitive skills in the overall development of older preschool-aged children.

Key words: Attention, cognitive development, thinking processes, consciousness, period, methods, analysis, memory, logical thinking, drawing conclusions, approach, decision-making.

INTRODUCTION

The formation and consistent development of human activity as a conscious action are closely connected with the formation and enrichment of consciousness. Consciousness is an internal mechanism that regulates activity and serves as the foundation for shaping the content of an individual's cognitive processes. Therefore, as consciousness develops, goal orientation, consistency, and effectiveness of activity increase.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Cognitive development is a complex process that reflects the gradual improvement of mental functions such as perception, memory, thinking, imagination, concept formation, logical reasoning, and problem-solving. The scientific foundations of this process were developed by the philosopher and psychologist Jean Piaget, who theoretically substantiated the sequential stages of children's thinking development.

The emergence and formation of human activity in various forms is a complex, multifactorial, and

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long-term process. In children aged 6–7, the transition from spontaneous and random actions to conscious and goal-directed activity occurs gradually. This process is influenced by natural development as well as educational and upbringing factors. A pedagogically enriched environment and the purposeful use of digital technologies contribute to the activation of cognitive processes and to more precise and effective thinking in children.

During the preschool period, it is difficult to strictly separate physical, sensorimotor, and cognitive development. Every early action—such as reaching for an object, grasping it, observing a familiar object, or performing simple manipulations—serves not only as a foundation for future complex motor skills but also supports the development of cognition, social communication, and emotional stability. Therefore, this period plays a decisive role in a child's overall psychological development.

Personality development refers to the process by which socially significant qualities and traits are formed through education and socialization. Although a child is born with certain anatomical and physiological potentials, these alone are insufficient for personality formation. These potentials develop under the influence of the social environment, interaction with adults, play activities, education, and daily experiences.

Through this process, the child actively interacts with the external world, assimilates socio-cultural experience, and begins to form historically established human qualities. The assimilation of cultural heritage enables children to acquire knowledge, social experience, and intellectual actions characteristic of adults. However, psychological qualities do not emerge in a ready-made form; they develop through education, play, learning, and meaningful communication. Psychologists emphasize that preschool age is the most sensitive period for the development of cognitive processes. During this stage, vocabulary expands significantly, attention span increases, visual memory strengthens, and the initial logical structures of thinking are formed.

By the age of 6–7, cognitive development enters a new stage characterized by more accurate perception, structured thinking processes, and changes in responses to problem situations. At this stage, readiness for learning activities increases, and the child begins to develop a conscious attitude toward the surrounding environment.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The theoretical foundations of this research are based on the scientific ideas proposed by leading linguists and psychologists such as L.S. Vygotsky, A.A. Fortunatov, Baudouin de Courtenay, A.A. Leontiev, and L.V. Shcherba. Their studies established a solid scientific basis for understanding the interconnection between language, thinking, speech, and psychological development, which serves as an important methodological framework for this research.

The concept of cognitive development originates from the English term "cognitive development" and refers to the consistent development of all cognitive processes, including perception, memory, concept formation, problem-solving, imagination, and logical thinking. This process is characterized by the increasing complexity of consciousness, the expansion of thinking operations, and the improvement of intellectual activity.

Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development explains the formation of cognition and the stage-by-stage development of children's thinking. His theory of genetic epistemology focuses on the origin and development of knowledge and has contributed significantly to the emergence of new concepts in psychology. Piaget defined rationality as an individual's ability to accurately reflect the external world and perform logical operations. According to him, as children interact with their environment, they develop new cognitive structures that gradually become more complex.

Piaget's theory is based on a constructivist approach, according to which children actively construct knowledge rather than passively receiving it. This approach differs from nativist theories, which emphasize innate abilities, and empirical theories, which focus solely on experience-based learning. Cognitive development, therefore, represents the child's independent construction of thinking strategies, conceptual systems, and mental operations.

Psychological development should be viewed as a gradual process linked to an individual's increasing participation in social activity. External actions are

gradually internalized, forming complex mental structures. Education plays a leading role in this process by guiding and accelerating cognitive development.

The cognitive domain includes a set of psychological processes that ensure learning and knowledge acquisition. The term "cognitive" derives from the Latin "cognitio" meaning "knowledge" or "understanding." Cognitive psychology examines internal mental processes such as perception, memory, attention, thinking, language, and imagination.

According to S. Reed, cognition is a complex process involving active interaction with the world, acquisition of practical skills, information processing, and transformation into knowledge, with language serving as a central component of cognitive processes. Cognitive psychological processes include perception, attention, imagination, memory, thinking, and speech. These processes form the foundation of all human activities and are supported by neurophysiological mechanisms and brain structures.

Perception is a cognitive process that enables individuals to form a subjective representation of the external world. Attention represents a conscious focus on specific objects or activities, while memory enables the retention and retrieval of life experiences. Thinking is the highest form of cognition, allowing individuals to understand relationships, identify cause-and-effect connections, and generate new knowledge.

CONCLUSION

The theoretical analysis conducted demonstrates that cognitive skills represent a complex of fundamental psychological processes that determine the intellectual development of preschool-aged children. These skills are formed through the interaction of perception, memory, thinking, attention, imagination, and speech, satisfying children's natural curiosity about the surrounding world. By the age of 6–7, cognitive skills reach a qualitatively new level, ensuring intellectual readiness for formal learning.

The intensification of cognitive processes during preschool age contributes to the development of logical thinking, problem-solving readiness, speech culture, and self-regulation. These skills also play a crucial role in social adaptation, creativity, and learning motivation. Therefore, systematic development of cognitive skills in older preschool-aged children is a key condition for improving the quality of preschool education.

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