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METHODOLOGY FOR USING DIDACTIC GAMES TO DEVELOP ATTENTION IN CHILDREN AGED 5–6

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Abstract. This article examines the pedagogical potential of using didactic games to develop attention concentration, attention stability, and voluntary attention skills in children aged 5–6. It analyzes the importance of play-based activities organized with due consideration for children's age-related and individual characteristics. The article also presents didactic games aimed at developing attention and methodological recommendations for their application in preschool education. Particular attention is paid to the importance of cooperation between educators and parents in reducing attention-related difficulties.

Keywords: preschool education, attention, didactic game, voluntary attention, cognitive development, methodology, syndrome.

INTRODUCTION

The preschool period is an important stage in a child's development, during which cognitive processes, including attention, memory, thinking, and perception, develop rapidly. In particular, at the age of 5–6, skills required for school readiness begin to take shape, making the ability to focus on a specific task, listen to instructions, plan activities, and complete an assigned task increasingly important. However, some children experience difficulties directing their attention toward a single activity, resisting external distractions, and completing tasks consistently. Such difficulties may affect children's educational activities, relationships with peers, and everyday lives. Therefore, the purposeful use of pedagogical methods aimed at developing children's attention is essential in preschool educational institutions.

When examining attention-related difficulties, it is important to distinguish typical age-related characteristics from attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). A child's tendency to become distracted or to be highly active does not, in itself, indicate the presence of this disorder. If ADHD is suspected, a comprehensive assessment by a qualified professional is required. Didactic games are among the important tools for developing children's attention in preschool education. Play activities are valuable because they correspond to children's natural interests, encourage active participation, and enable them to complete tasks in an engaging manner. Games involving color recognition, shape comparison, pattern identification, listening to sounds, and following specific rules can help children exercise their attentional processes.

The relevance of this topic is determined by the need to improve age-appropriate pedagogical methods that can be practically applied to develop attention in preschool-aged children. The aim of this study is to identify the pedagogical potential of didactic games for developing attention in children aged 5–6 and to formulate methodological recommendations for their use. The research object is the process of developing children's cognitive abilities in preschool educational institutions, while the research subject comprises the pedagogical methods and tools used to develop attention through didactic games.

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LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The development of attention in preschool-aged children has been examined from various perspectives in the pedagogical and psychological research of both international and local scholars. In particular, L. S. Vygotsky established the importance of the social environment, cooperation with adults, and purposeful activity in children's psychological development. His theoretical perspectives provide a foundation for explaining the importance of educator support, clear instructions, and purposeful activities in developing children's attention. D. B. Elkonin studied the role of play in the development of preschool-aged children. Based on his ideas, didactic and rule-based games can be considered tools for helping children practise focusing their attention, regulating their actions, and following established rules.

Contemporary international research also examines attention development in relation to executive functions and self-regulation. A. Diamond (2013) explored the components of executive functions, including working memory, cognitive flexibility, and inhibitory control, highlighting their importance in human functioning. This approach helps explain the need to develop preschool children's abilities to follow instructions, resist distractions, and regulate their own behaviour.

A systematic review published in Educational Psychology Review in 2023 examined interventions designed to develop self-regulation and executive functions in preschool settings. The review analysed the potential of various educational interventions. Its findings highlight the importance of organizing play, physical activity, and other purposeful activities in ways that correspond to children's developmental characteristics. This approach helps substantiate the need for consistent use of play-based activities to develop attention in children aged 5–6.

Research by Uzbek scholars has also addressed the development of attention in preschool-aged children and the pedagogical potential of didactic games. For example, an article by S. M. Qurbonova, published in 2023 under the title "Scholars' Views on the Development of Attention in Preschool-Aged Children," analyses scholarly perspectives on children's attention development. This study is relevant as a local academic source for examining the theoretical foundations of the present topic.

RESULTS

Games designed to develop children's attention should progress from simple tasks to more complex activities, be conducted using clear instructions, and ensure children's active participation. For this purpose, games were selected to exercise visual attention, auditory attention, observation skills, and the ability to regulate one's own actions.

For example, in the "Find the Difference" game, children are shown two similar pictures and asked to identify the differences between them. This game helps exercise visual attention and observation skills. In the "Magic Colours" game, children select a particular colour or shape from a set of differently coloured shapes according to the educator's instructions. This task helps children focus on specific features and follow instructions. In the "What Did You Hear?" game, children listen to sounds such as birdsong, a bell, or rain and identify their sources. This activity is intended to exercise auditory attention.

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In the “Follow the Rule” game, children perform actions in response to specific signals. For example, they walk when the “green” signal is given and stop when the “red” signal is given. This game helps children practise listening to instructions, responding accordingly, and regulating their behaviour. In the “Continue the Sequence” game, children are shown a sequence consisting of colours, shapes, or pictures and are asked to identify the underlying pattern and determine the next element. In addition to attention, this game supports observation skills and logical thinking. When organizing these games, educators should consider children’s fatigue levels and individual abilities. Activities should be brief and engaging, and movement breaks should be provided when necessary. Children’s performance should not be assessed solely on the speed with which they complete a task; their understanding of instructions, ability to redirect their attention to the task, and participation in the activity should also be considered.

As a result of the theoretical analysis and methodological design, the main areas of didactic games aimed at developing attention in children aged 5–6 were systematized. The games were designed to help children practise visual and auditory attention, observation, following instructions, and regulating their own actions. The games presented above target different aspects of attention. Using them in rotation may support children’s ability to receive information through visual and auditory channels, identify relevant features, understand instructions, and regulate their behaviour.

The methodological analysis also identified the importance of organizing games systematically. Initially, the child’s participation in activities, understanding of instructions, and task performance are observed. A game suited to the child’s interests is then selected, and the task is explained in a simple and understandable manner. During the sessions, tasks are repeated according to the child’s abilities and gradually made more challenging. At the end of the process, the educator observes how well the child focuses on the task, follows instructions, and sustains participation. Cooperation with parents is also recommended to support the child through similar activities at home.

DISCUSSION

Using didactic games to develop attention in preschool-aged children is a pedagogical approach that corresponds to their developmental characteristics and natural interests. During play, children observe, listen, compare, remember, and attempt to regulate their actions in order to complete a particular task. In this respect, play-based activities can support the development of children’s cognitive processes.

L. S. Vygotsky’s views on the importance of the social environment and purposeful activity in children’s development help explain the significance of adult support in the educational process. During games, clear instructions, demonstrations, and timely assistance from educators help children understand tasks and regulate their activities. At the same time, didactic games should be adapted to children’s individual characteristics. Some children may show greater interest in visual tasks, whereas others may respond more positively to movement-based or auditory games.

When organizing attention-development activities, it is important to avoid placing excessive pressure on children, refrain from comparing them with other children, and encourage even small achievements. Activities should stimulate children’s interest, correspond to their abilities, and take place in a positive emotional environment. In cooperation with parents, organizing short

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games at home, providing clear and sequential instructions, and reducing unnecessary distractions may help support children's everyday functioning.

However, it would be inaccurate to assume that didactic games alone can eliminate all attention-related difficulties. If difficulties involving concentration, impulsivity, or excessive activity persist over time, occur in different settings, and significantly affect a child's daily functioning, parents are advised to consult a paediatrician or a qualified child-development professional. Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder cannot be diagnosed solely on the basis of pedagogical observation or the results of a single game.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, developing attention in children aged 5–6 is one of the important tasks of preschool education. At this developmental stage, particular attention should be given to fostering the ability to concentrate, listen to instructions, identify relevant features, and complete tasks consistently. Purposeful use of didactic games such as "Find the Difference," "Magic Colours," "What Did You Hear?," "Follow the Rule," and "Continue the Sequence" may help children exercise visual and auditory attention, observation skills, and the ability to regulate their own actions.

Systematic organization of games, consideration of children's individual characteristics, positive reinforcement, and cooperation with parents are important components of pedagogical work aimed at developing attention. At the same time, professional consultation is necessary when serious and persistent attention-related difficulties are observed. Testing the proposed methodological approaches in practice and evaluating their outcomes using scientific criteria represent important directions for future research.

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