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THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL CONCEPT OF DEVELOPING READING CULTURE IN OLDER PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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Abstract. The development of reading culture in older preschool children is an important component of contemporary preschool education, as early experiences with books, stories, illustrations and shared reading contribute not only to emerging literacy but also to children's speech, cognitive activity, imagination, emotional development and social interaction. The purpose of this study is to theoretically substantiate the foundations and develop a pedagogical concept for the development of reading culture in older preschool children. The study employs theoretical analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalisation, modelling and interpretation of scientific and pedagogical literature. The proposed concept considers reading culture as an integrative personal formation comprising motivational, cognitive, speech-communicative, emotional-aesthetic, behavioural and reflective components. The conceptual framework is based on child-centredness, developmental appropriateness, activity, dialogical interaction, cultural relevance, continuity and cooperation between preschool institutions and families. Particular attention is given to shared and dialogic reading, literary discussion, dramatization, interactive games, independent work with books and reflective activities. The article proposes a structural-functional model that connects pedagogical conditions, mechanisms, educational technologies and expected developmental outcomes. The study argues that the development of reading culture should move beyond the transmission of



literary knowledge toward the formation of a sustainable child's subjective relationship with books and reading. The proposed pedagogical concept may serve as a theoretical and methodological basis for developing preschool curricula, educational technologies and diagnostic tools aimed at strengthening children's emerging reading culture.

Keywords: preschool education, older preschool children, reading culture, early literacy, pedagogical concept, shared reading, dialogic reading, literary development, reading motivation, child-centered education.

INTRODUCTION. The contemporary transformation of preschool education requires a reconsideration of approaches to children's early literary and reading development. Reading in early childhood should not be understood merely as a preparatory activity for mastering formal reading skills. It represents a multidimensional educational process through which children develop language, imagination, comprehension, emotional responsiveness, social communication and initial cultural orientations.

International research increasingly emphasises that early language experience constitutes an important foundation for subsequent literacy development. UNICEF notes that children's language development is strongly connected with responsive interaction with adults and that early literacy develops through meaningful social experiences. At the same time, the OECD emphasises that literacy-related activities in early childhood should be incorporated into developmentally appropriate, playful and child-centred pedagogical practices rather than being reduced to direct academic instruction.

The book occupies a special position within this process. A children's book simultaneously functions as a source of linguistic experience, cultural knowledge, emotional experience and imaginative activity. The interaction of the child with a literary text creates opportunities for developing vocabulary, narrative competence, comprehension, questioning, prediction, interpretation and independent expression.

UNESCO's Science of Learning materials highlight the significance of shared



reading for emergent literacy and note that interactive or dialogic reading can enrich children's vocabulary and understanding. Evidence reviewed by the U.S. Institute of Education Sciences also indicates positive effects of dialogic reading on young children's oral language development. Consequently, the development of reading culture in older preschool children should be examined as a complex pedagogical phenomenon rather than as an isolated methodological task.

The scientific problem addressed in this article is the need to establish a theoretically grounded pedagogical concept that explains the structure, principles, pedagogical conditions and mechanisms of developing reading culture in older preschool children.

Purpose of the study. The purpose of the study is to theoretically substantiate the foundations and formulate a pedagogical concept for developing reading culture in older preschool children within contemporary preschool education.

Research objectives. The study pursues the following objectives: to clarify the pedagogical essence of the concept of reading culture in older preschool children; to identify its structural components and functional characteristics; to determine the theoretical and methodological principles underlying its development; to identify effective pedagogical conditions and mechanisms; to formulate a pedagogical concept for the development of children's reading culture; to develop a structural-functional model of the proposed concept; to determine prospective directions for its implementation in preschool educational practice.

MATERIALS AND METHODS.

The methodological basis of the study is formed by an interdisciplinary approach integrating the principles of preschool pedagogy, developmental psychology, literary education, language development and cultural education.

The study is conceptual and theoretical in nature. The following research methods were employed: theoretical analysis – to examine scientific approaches to literacy,



reading, literary development and reading culture; comparative analysis – to identify similarities and differences between existing pedagogical approaches; synthesis – to integrate theoretical positions into a coherent conceptual framework; generalisation – to identify common pedagogical patterns; modelling – to construct a structural-functional model of reading culture development; systematisation – to determine the relationship among components, principles, pedagogical conditions and outcomes; interpretation – to establish the pedagogical meaning of children’s interaction with literary texts.

The methodological logic of the research is based on the interaction of several approaches.

Child-centred approach. The child is regarded as an active subject of literary interaction rather than a passive recipient of information. This means that the educational process should take into account children’s interests, individual experiences, emotional responses, developmental characteristics and communicative needs.

Activity-based approach. Reading culture develops through activity. Therefore, children should not only listen to literary works but also discuss, question, retell, dramatise, illustrate, compare, predict and transform literary situations.

Dialogical approach. The meaning of a literary text is constructed through interaction. The adult’s role is therefore not limited to reading the text but includes asking open questions, encouraging children’s interpretations, expanding their responses and creating opportunities for peer communication. Research on dialogic reading defines it as an interactive shared-reading practice in which adults encourage children to participate actively and gradually assume a more active storytelling role.

Cultural approach. A book introduces the child to linguistic, moral, aesthetic and cultural values. Reading culture therefore represents one of the mechanisms through which the child enters the symbolic and cultural world of society.

Developmental approach. Pedagogical content should correspond to children’s developmental possibilities. The OECD emphasises the importance of developmentally



appropriate practice and warns against replacing child-centred preschool pedagogy with excessive direct academic instruction.

Continuity approach. Reading development in preschool should be connected with subsequent primary education while preserving the developmental characteristics of preschool childhood

RESULTS

The pedagogical essence of reading culture. The analysis makes it possible to define reading culture in older preschool children as an integrative personal formation that reflects the child's positive and sustainable attitude toward books and literary texts, motivation to interact with them, ability to understand and interpret literary content, capacity for expressive speech and communication, emotional-aesthetic response, and readiness to independently participate in book-related activities.

Thus, reading culture cannot be reduced to the ability to recognise letters or reproduce a text. Its conceptual structure can be represented as follows:

Reading culture = motivation + literary comprehension + speech communication + emotional-aesthetic response + activity + reflection.

This interpretation expands the traditional understanding of preschool reading preparation.

A child who demonstrates a developed reading culture: shows interest in books; chooses books according to personal interests; listens attentively to literary texts; understands the main content; identifies characters and their relationships; expresses emotional responses; predicts events; asks and answers questions; retells stories; discusses literary situations; connects fictional events with personal experience; participates in dramatization; creates alternative endings or new stories; demonstrates independent interest in books.

Therefore, the ultimate outcome is not simply “knowing books” but developing a subjective cultural relationship with reading.



Structural components of reading culture

The proposed concept includes six interrelated components.

1) Motivational component

This component reflects the child's interest in books, stories, characters and literary activities. Indicators include: voluntary choice of books; desire to listen to stories; emotional involvement; curiosity about literary content; repeated engagement with favourite works.

2) Cognitive-literary component

This component reflects children's ability to understand literary content and identify its structural and semantic elements.

Indicators include: understanding the plot; identification of characters; recognition of cause-and-effect relationships; prediction of events; comparison of characters; identification of the main idea at an age-appropriate level.

3) Speech-communicative component

This component reflects the child's ability to express impressions and interpretations through oral speech.

Indicators include: retelling; narrative description; reasoning; answering questions; asking questions; participation in dialogue; use of literary vocabulary.

4) Emotional-aesthetic component

This component reflects the child's emotional response to literary images and aesthetic features.

Indicators include: empathy toward characters; emotional identification; recognition of positive and negative actions; appreciation of artistic images; interest in illustrations; to express aesthetic impressions.

5) Activity-behavioural component

This component characterises the child's practical participation in reading-related



activities. It includes: independent interaction with books; dramatization; role play; book-based creative activities; illustration; storytelling; participation in literary games.

6) Reflective component

The reflective component represents the child's ability to relate literary content to personal experience and evaluate one's own understanding. For example:

- “What would you do?”
- “Why did the character act this way?”
- “What could happen differently?”
- “Which character would you like to be and why?”

This component transforms reading from a reproductive activity into a process of personal meaning-making.

Pedagogical concept of reading culture development. The proposed pedagogical concept is based on the following central idea: reading culture in older preschool children develops most effectively when a book becomes not merely an object of instruction but a medium for communication, imagination, emotional experience, creative activity and personal meaning-making.

Pedagogical conditions

The analysis indicates that the following conditions are particularly important.

First condition: creation of a rich literary environment. The preschool environment should provide free access to age-appropriate books, illustrated literature, thematic book collections and child-created books. UNICEF identifies access to children's books and adult engagement with books and pictures as important elements of the early learning environment.

Second condition: dialogic interaction. Reading should be transformed from a one-way transmission process into a dialogue involving questions, predictions, explanations and children's interpretations.



Third condition: integration of reading with play. Literary content should be continued through: role play; dramatization; puppet theatre; literary games; creative construction; drawing; music and movement.

Fourth condition: development of independent reading behaviour. Children should have opportunities to choose books, explore illustrations, “read” familiar stories through pictures and create their own narratives.

Fifth condition: family participation. The development of reading culture should continue beyond the preschool institution. Family reading, storytelling and discussion can strengthen children’s literary experiences. UNICEF emphasises the importance of parents and caregivers actively engaging in children’s early learning and literacy development.

Innovative pedagogical technologies

The concept proposes an integrated technological system rather than reliance on a single method.

“Book Detective.” Children search for clues in illustrations and predict the content of a story.

“Find the Story.” Children reconstruct the sequence of events from illustrations.

“Character’s Diary.” Children speak from the perspective of a literary character.

“What If?” Children transform the plot by changing one important event.

“Little Book Lover.” Children choose a book independently, present it to peers and explain why they selected it.

“Story Laboratory.” Children create alternative endings, new characters or new situations based on a familiar literary work.

“Family Reading Bridge.” Teachers and parents organise coordinated reading activities between the preschool institution and home.

These technologies are intended to combine literary comprehension with speech, creativity, emotional development and social interaction.

Structural-functional model



The proposed model consists of four levels.

Level I – Motivational: interest → emotional response → reading motivation.

Level II – Cognitive: understanding → analysis → comparison → generalisation.

Level III – Communicative-creative: discussion → retelling → dramatization → creative transformation.

Level IV – Reflective: personal interpretation → self-expression → value orientation → independent reading behaviour.

The levels are interconnected rather than strictly linear. The general model can therefore be represented as follows:

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that the concept of reading culture requires a broader interpretation than traditional approaches to early literacy.

Contemporary evidence supports the idea that shared reading can contribute to language and literacy development when children actively participate in interaction around the text. A systematic review of dialogic reading studies found evidence of positive effects across a range of language and literacy outcomes, while also noting methodological limitations and the need for further research concerning implementation conditions.

This is particularly important for preschool pedagogy because early reading experiences should not be transformed into premature formal schooling. The OECD's analysis indicates that literacy-related knowledge can be embedded in playful small-group activities, including shared dialogical reading and discussion, supporting vocabulary, comprehension and world knowledge.

Therefore, the pedagogical concept proposed in this study differs from a narrow skills-based model in three fundamental ways. First, it shifts the focus from reading skills to reading culture. Second, it shifts the educational process from teacher transmission to child participation. Third, it shifts the outcome from reproduction of literary content to



personal interpretation and independent reading behaviour.

The proposed approach also corresponds with evidence emphasising the role of caregivers and educators in children's emerging literacy. UNICEF identifies reading, storytelling, singing, drawing and play as activities through which adults can stimulate children's cognitive, social and emotional development.

At the same time, the concept should not be interpreted as suggesting that one pedagogical technology will automatically produce identical results for all children. Individual developmental differences, language environment, family reading practices, quality of literature and teacher competence may substantially influence outcomes. Accordingly, future empirical research should examine the effectiveness of the proposed model through longitudinal and experimental designs involving different preschool contexts.

CONCLUSION

The study theoretically substantiates a pedagogical concept for developing reading culture in older preschool children.

The principal conclusion is that reading culture should be interpreted as a multidimensional personal formation rather than as a preliminary form of technical reading competence. It incorporates motivation, literary comprehension, speech communication, emotional-aesthetic response, activity and reflection.

The proposed pedagogical concept is based on the integration of child-centred, developmental, activity-based, dialogical, cultural and continuity approaches. The conceptual model establishes the following developmental trajectory:

The study also establishes that an effective reading environment should integrate books, dialogic communication, play, dramatization, creative activities, independent book selection and family participation.

The theoretical significance of the study lies in expanding the conceptual understanding of preschool reading culture and establishing relationships between its



structural components, pedagogical conditions and developmental mechanisms.

The practical significance lies in the possibility of using the proposed concept as a basis for: preschool educational programmes; teacher training; methodological manuals; reading-development technologies; diagnostic criteria and indicators; family reading programmes; literary and speech-development activities.

Further empirical research should focus on experimental verification of the model, development of reliable diagnostic instruments and determination of the effectiveness of specific pedagogical technologies in different preschool educational contexts.

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