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GAMES AND ACTIVITIES AS A MEANS OF STIMULATING THE COGNITIVE INTERESTS OF YOUNG SCHOOL STUDENTS

ИГРЫ И ЗАНЯТИЯ КАК СРЕДСТВО СТИМУЛИРОВАНИЯ ПОЗНАВАТЕЛЬНЫХ ИНТЕРЕСОВ МЛАДШИХ ШКОЛЬНИКОВ

Abstract:

In this article, we explore the means of stimulating the cognitive interests of young schoolchildren through games and activities. We define the concept of "cognitive activity" and present means of stimulating creative thinking, interests, and levels of cognitive activity. Observations from renowned pedagogues and psychologists provide insights into the didactic, cognitive, and developmental educational significance of games, as well as the principles for implementing didactic games. We also discuss the role of games in socializing young schoolchildren, forming interpersonal relationships, enhancing communication, and developing educational motivations.

Keywords: junior school, means of stimulating interests, cognitive activity, interpersonal communication, creative thinking, didactic games, role-playing games, play-staging, socialization

Introduction

In the modern world, developing a person's cognitive activity and interests is a pressing issue. This interest stems from the necessity for growth in the information society, seamless integration of digital technologies, and the demands of living in the rapidly changing socio-cultural conditions. As life progresses, nurturing and developing students' cognitive interests, creative thinking abilities, and decision-making skills become paramount in education. Stimulating cognitive interests can be achieved by making learning engaging, fostering a creative learning atmosphere, and posing complex yet intriguing problems. To this end, it is crucial to identify teaching methods that are not only appealing and engaging for children, but

also carry educational and cognitive value, while concurrently stimulating students' creative thinking. In studies aimed at activating students' cognitive activity in the educational process, considering their age, individual-psychological characteristics, reviewing the principles of educational content selection, developing pedagogical competencies, pedagogical influence, shaping the educational environment, and various other factors are also vital. Activity activation is a continuous process that propels learners into energetic, purposeful learning activities, helping to overcome passivity and inactivity in both mental and physical tasks.

Literature Review

As Sh. A. Amonashvili notes, "Cognitive activity is the proactive, active attitude of students toward acquiring knowledge, as well as the demonstration of interests, independence, and voluntary efforts in learning. It pertains to both the activity of the teacher and the students in the first case, and to the independent activity of the students in the second case" [4].

In professional literature, the levels of students' cognitive activity are distinguished based on the following principles:

According to the attitude towards the activity:

1. *Potential Activity*: Characterizes a person in terms of readiness for a certain activity, goal orientation, and aspiration.
2. *Demonstrated Activity*: Describes a person according to the quality of specific activities performed, with main indicators including enthusiasm, efficiency, independence, creativity, and willpower [5, p. 216].

According to duration and stability:

1. *Situational Activity*: Possesses a transient nature.
2. *Sustained Activity*: Determines the dominant attitude towards an activity.

According to the nature of the activity:

1. Reproductive-imitation, which is characterized by mastery of the ability to memorize and reproduce ready-made knowledge, according to the example.
2. Search-performative, characterized by the aspiration to reveal the meaning of phenomena and processes, to determine the connections between them, to master the ways of applying knowledge in changing conditions. At the same time, the means of performing the given task are searched independently.
3. The creative level is characterized by mastery of the ability to initiate certain activities, realize and set goals and objectives, independently develop an activity plan, and apply knowledge in new conditions.

Results and Discussion

The most general indicators of the child's cognitive activity are considered to be:

- focusing attention on the studied subject, topic,
- the child's own initiative to apply to this or that field of knowledge, the desire to learn more, participation in debates,
- positive emotional feelings when overcoming activity difficulties,
- emotional manifestations (interested facial play, gestures, etc.) [8, p. 116]. The psycho-pedagogical significance of the game is great in the development of cognitive activity, observation, and speech of younger schoolchildren. Game activity is the subject of study by specialists in various fields: philosophers, sociologists, culturalists, ethnographers, pedagogues and psychologists.

The game plays a pivotal role in various aspects of child development, including fostering a sense of community, enhancing interpersonal communication, cultivating positive personal

traits, showcasing practical skills, and facilitating emotional interactions. It serves not only as a pedagogical and cognitive tool but also as a means of personal development. Games foster children's intrinsic needs and motivations, contribute to the enhancement of voluntary memory, and aid in overcoming cognitive egocentrism. Observing children's play provides valuable insights into their mental states and the progression of their social relationships.

Practically, gaming activities fulfill several functions:

- *Developmental*: They engage, entertain, inspire, and capture interest, serving as a primary function of play.
- *Communicative*: They facilitate language learning and communication skills.
- *Therapeutic*: They help overcome challenges encountered in various life situations.
- *Diagnostic*: They help identify deviations from standard behavior and promote self-discovery.
- *Adjustive*: They introduce positive changes in personal attributes.
- *International Communication*: They encourage the assimilation of shared socio-cultural values.
- *Socialization*: They integrate children into social networks and teach them societal norms.

F. Froebel, a prominent figure in pedagogy, emphasized the didactic, cognitive, and developmental importance of play. He believed that all positive attributes stem from play, underscoring its significance and depth. According to him, play facilitates a child's physical, verbal, cognitive, and creative development, positioning it as a crucial activity for preschoolers.

Educators, acknowledging these benefits, focus on methodologies that enhance children's mental agility, promote independent thought, and encourage the application of acquired knowledge and skills in diverse scenarios. E. Bernie described play as an activity primarily for enjoyment, occasionally serving educational purposes, distinguishing it from work and art. Jan Amos Comensky, a Czech educational theorist, viewed play as an essential child activity, aligning with their natural tendencies and contributing to intellectual development, language skills, and social integration.

L. S. Vygotsky, a developmental psychologist, highlighted play's vital role in child development, referring to it as "the ninth wave of child development." He believed play integral in shaping a child's personality and in facilitating significant psychological transformations, paving the way for advanced developmental stages.

Play is a multifaceted child activity, instrumental for cognitive, educational, and developmental purposes. It fosters the acquisition of various skills, enhances communication, and contributes to holistic personal development. The didactic game, a subset of play, specifically targets mental development, stimulating cognitive processes and fostering an interest in learning.

V. A. Sukhomlinsky, an educational theorist, underscored the game's unique functions, unreplicable by other activities, and highlighted its role in nurturing a child's imagination and adaptability. Games vary in nature, encompassing didactic, role-playing, and various other forms. Role-playing games, in particular, facilitate the transition from reproductive to creative cognitive activities, although the contemporary prevalence of computer games poses challenges to this developmental process.

The didactic game, characterized by independent or group activities, supports knowledge acquisition and skill development. It accommodates individual differences, ensuring inclusive and supportive participation for all children, regardless of their developmental status. Through didactic games, children learn to navigate challenges, cultivate skills, and foster cognitive interests, ultimately enriching the educational experience.

V. I. Loginova singles out the following principles of the implementation of didactic games: developmental learning, nurturing learning, accessible learning, systematicity and sequence, awareness and activity of knowledge acquisition and application, individual approach to children [7]. V. I. Loginova, considering learning as a process of multifaceted development of the child's personality, adds to the principles listed above the principle of stability of knowledge as a justification for the connection between learning and the child's daily life, activities (play, work), that is, during the game, the child, acquiring the skills of educational activities, acquires is also the main methods of performing educational tasks [7].

The didactic game provides ample opportunities to focus the child's attention, engage in the learning process, and stimulate learning motivation. By showing interest in the learning material through the game, children are gradually involved in the learning process.

Junior school age is one of the important stages of personality development, formation and establishment. During this time, the child goes from a carefree childhood to a period in which there is a need to assume new social roles, be responsible, fulfill various demands, plan activities, perform tasks, etc. The main feature of the attention of a younger schoolboy is that he finds it difficult to focus his attention on the educational material for a long time. The child's attention is focused if the material is new, attractive, unusual, interesting.

A junior schoolchild especially remembers what surprises him, attracts him, is directly related to his interests and life experience. In this sense, didactic games are of irreplaceable importance and contribute to the development of cognitive activity, memory, and concentration. Since the knowledge and impressions received in childhood are indelible, so in order to visualize the feelings of a younger schoolchild, he should be encouraged to think about the educational material, express his opinion, and imagine himself in the role of a hero. Taking into account these characteristics of six-year-olds, the learning process should be organized using all the children's senses, the teacher should talk less, show more, perform less, make them participate more.

From the very first days of school, work should be started on the development of children's senses and their activation in the educational process" [1, p. 26]. At a young age, the heroes of children's literature, cartoons and films become ideal for the child, and embodying them during the games, the child becomes a bearer of positive qualities, sympathizes with the heroes who fight for an idea. V. A. Sukhomlinsky writes: "It is very important that the amazing world of nature, play, beauty, music, imagination, creativity, which surrounded the child before attending school, is not closed in front of the children by the classroom door. In the first months and years of schoolchildren's life, learning should not become the only type of activity. A child will love school only when the teachers give him the opportunity to be happy as before coming to school" [10, p. 95].

In pedagogy, great importance is given to the role of play in the learning system and organizing learning with the help of play. Children's cognitive activity is demonstrated during didactic games, especially if these games are attractive and interesting. Thus, for example, in the game "Captain", children, being in a game situation, turn the imaginary steering wheel, change the direction of the ship, sound the horn, give instructions to the crew, imitating the work, movements and vocabulary of the captain. It is an active cognitive process, it requires not only appropriate movements, pretense, but also mental activity, ingenuity, imagination, verbal abilities. Game-like tasks develop children's logic. Most of them require the ability to count, compare, tell, express one's own opinion, make a decision, as well as self-management, cooperative qualities. During the game, a lot of space should be devoted to interesting problems and tasks, the main purpose of which is the formation of the ability to repeat, consolidate and apply what has been learned. Various pedagogical, logical, fascinating exercises are performed by children with love. They independently or with the help of the teacher solve, decide, find, compile, invent, distinguish, etc. And in the meantime, children willy-nilly learn everything that is planned and hidden behind these tasks. Games develop a child's imagination, the ability to quickly find solutions, combined thinking. The game has

such a wonderful feature that it can imperceptibly involve the child in the process of active learning. Thus, for example, a first-grader during letter or number learning gets acquainted with a letter or number that has a mouth, eyes and paws, talks to children and tells about itself. The children squeeze his paw, say hello and promise not to hurt or forget him. Children communicate with the given letter or number, after which, when they make their "new friend" from different materials, they remember the new letter or number easily and with pleasure. In that case, appropriation takes place almost automatically. A game should not act as a separate skill, but should be integral to learning and serve the educational purpose. It is necessary to arouse interest in children and thereby contribute to the solution of pedagogical problems.

Conclusion

It is desirable to see any game and activity not in an unbroken pattern, but in a gradual development, so that the child does not lose interest in both the game and learning. The game and activity is a unique way of socializing a child. The behavior of children, the nature of interpersonal relations, and the culture of communication are manifested in the game. The game brings closer, unites children, contributes to the formation of friendly feelings. Such a combination of game and real relationships gives an opportunity not only to form children's positive personal characteristics, practical abilities, but also to develop cognitive activity, being a means of stimulating cognitive interests.

Thus, to make the learning process such that learners become active participants of that process, that the role of passive listener is replaced by the role of active participant. Due to this, students become more relaxed and independent, they develop positive motivations for learning, cognitive interests and abilities.

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