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Teacher's professional gaming competence as a condition for preschool education quality enhancement

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Abstract

The article deals with the problem of forming and improving preschool teachers’ professional gaming competence. The research provides data on preschool teachers’ ideas about the purpose of developing children’s game activity. It also studies the impact of the social and stylistic characteristics of preschool teacher’s professional activity on her/his attitude to the preschool child’s game.

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1. Introduction

The development of modern preschool education is closely connected with the requirements for the educator’s professional skills. It makes the problem of improving the quality of educator training highly relevant, the focus being on their self-improvement and personal willingness to work in the professional sphere discussed. The most meaningful aspects of teachers’ training here are formation of psychological and educational readiness to develop the child in “Specific child’s” activities (Zaporozhets A.V.), support for children’s cooperation in a game while taking into account changes in the gaming subculture; exploration of the culture of game experience as such.

The analysis of the research into the educator’s competence formation in the sphere of preschool game activity development showed that scholars have covered its various aspects: educator’s playing skills (Zhukovskaya R.I., Mendzheritskaya D.V, Novoselova N.S.); play position as a personal process of education (Anikeeva N.P.,

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Gruzdova E.V., Solntseva O., Timonin A.I. et al.); an educator’s orientation on playing (Panko E.A., Smirnova E.O.); competence in cooperating with children (Korzhenevich T.L.), etc.

2. Method

At the same time life observations and the recent specific studies show that the majority of teachers at preschool institutions are characterized by having stereotypes about the game as a regulated process, its rich potential not being used to the full extent. We studied teachers’ views on game activities for preschool children depending on the length of their experience. The participants of our research were 525 preschool teachers from Minsk and the Minsk region in the age group of 20-60 years. We divided the preschool teachers into three groups according to their teaching experience: 1) up to 10 years; 2) 10-15 years; 3) over 15 years.

We used two questionnaires. The first one was to find out the basic types of child’s activity preferences, which determine the organization of the educational process. The second questionnaire was to identify modern preschool teachers’ target orientation to preschool children’s game activity. It included questions about what they thought was necessary to form, develop and educate in a child’s game.

3. Results and discussion

According to the results of the survey, the biggest part of pupils’ free time is spent on educational games (subject-didactic, didactic) - 56%. Reading books to children is the second most popular game-like activity (19%). The third most popular ones are talking (38%), outdoor games (31%), and children’s creative activities (19%). The choice of types of children's activities largely depends on teachers’ experience. Younger teachers prefer active forms of game activities or didactic games, while experienced teachers often create conditions for independent playing and supporting children’s initiatives.

Teachers’ views on the aims of children’s game playing determine the education process as well as the results of children’s development desired. Modern teachers’ orientation concerning preschool children’s game activities were assessed by questions about what, in the teachers’ opinion, should be formed, developed and brought up in children through playing. The data analysis showed that the developing potential of playing games lies primarily in the development of the child’s intellectual abilities and communicative qualities. Every third teacher notes the importance of cognitive activity, the formation of behavior culture and organizational abilities in children through playing. The possibility to develop a child’s imagination, creativity, moral and ethical qualities, and individual abilities through playing is marked less often. The data analysis also shows that teaching experience influences teachers’ orientation on game activities. For example, teachers with an experience of less than 10 years are focused on the child’s cognitive and communication development in the process of game playing.

Compared to the younger teachers, those with a work record of 10-15 years outline the importance of developing a behavior culture and communication skills, focusing on children’s socialization through playing. More experienced teachers (with the experience of 15 years and more) concentrate on developing the child's creative potential and its personality and also on meeting his/her current needs as an important aspect of playing. Thus, we can distinguish the differences in the orientation of teachers with different experience on playing as an educational activity. Younger teachers are characterized by a strictly didactic attitude towards the game, focus on the child's social adaptation. Meanwhile, more experienced teachers’ priorities are to develop the child’s creative potential and reveal his/her capabilities and individual possibilities in game playing. That’s why a preschool teacher should not only realize the important role of playing as a children’s leading activity, but also have the appropriate professional gaming skills, characterized by his deep interest and enthusiasm in it; the ability to create a cultural game space, take roles in games, use communication techniques actively as the main component of game interaction and support children’s initiatives.
4. Conclusion

It is deemed necessary to improve the psychological and pedagogical willingness to cooperate in the “teacher-playing children” system during the process of the training and refreshing of preschool teachers’ professional competence. It is no coincidence that, according to specific studies [1], [2], the game (first of all, the role-playing one) is more developed among pupils whose teachers have a democratic style of communication and demonstrate an active positive attitude towards children than among those preschool children, who are educated by teachers with an authoritarian style and a negative (or unstable positive) attitude. The teacher’s formed position in games considerably enhances the chance of his being included into the "children’s play society" and allows him to influence the development of the game.

Thus, when forming and improving pre-school education teachers’ professional competence it is highly advisable to enhance their psychological and pedagogical readiness to support children’s playing interaction. More attention should be paid to the formation of a relevant attitude to game playing among both preschool children and their teachers. We believe that efforts made by professionals in this sphere will contribute to the development of game playing as the most important activity of the preschool period.

References