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**DEVELOPMENT OF COGNITIVE ACTIVITY IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN**

Recently, there has been a significant focus on fostering the cognitive development of preschool children. Within the framework of lifelong education, which underpins the continuity of the preschool level, the emphasis has shifted from not only nurturing general abilities, creative imagination, and communication skills in preschoolers but also highlighting the cultivation of their curiosity as a foundational element of cognitive activity.

The intricacies of human cognitive activity involve a complex interplay between external and internal factors. Initially, external influences play a pivotal role in shaping an individual's cognitive activity. However, as a person's consciousness evolves and their personal direction becomes established, internal conditions, such as experience, worldview, interests, and needs, assume greater significance in their activities. These factors, despite their inherent contradictions, collectively shape the course of an individual's actions, thereby exerting a profound influence on the overall development of their psychological processes.

The period between 3 and 5 years of age represents a critical phase for the emergence of cognitive needs. During this developmental stage, the groundwork for a child's future personality is established, and the essential foundations for their physical, mental, and moral growth are laid. It's unfavorable if cognitive interests fail to blossom during this time, as it is crucial for the child to engage with and show curiosity about the world, including nature and people. Without such engagement, the child may miss out on the opportunity to accumulate vibrant impressions and gather information, which are fundamental for the subsequent acquisition of a structured knowledge base.

L.S. Vygotsky unveiled the driving forces behind a child's cognitive development, including their needs, interests, and motivations, which activate thought processes and steer them in specific directions. According to Vygotsky, a child's growth and the development of their abilities do not hinge on racing ahead of their peers with rapid strides. Instead, it's achieved by their wide and comprehensive engagement in various forms of activities, knowledge, and experiences that align with their age-appropriate capacities. The child's curiosity extends to their surroundings, and they actively participate in the available activities, utilizing and expanding their capabilities. This approach lays a solid foundation for their continued development.

The development of cognitive interests in preschoolers follows two primary pathways:

1. The gradual enrichment of a child's experiences involves infusing their encounters with the world with new knowledge and information. This enrichment stimulates the child's cognitive activity. The more facets of the surrounding reality that a child explores, the broader their possibilities for cultivating and reinforcing enduring cognitive interests become.

2. This progression of cognitive interests involves the gradual broadening and deepening of these interests within the same domain of reality. Additionally, each stage of development has its distinct level of intensity, expression, and meaningful direction in cognition.

Between the ages of 2 and 3, children focus their cognitive efforts on the objects in their surroundings and the actions associated with these objects. At this stage, children actively explore the world guided by the principle: "I learn from what I see and interact with." Information is gathered through hands-on interactions with objects, a child's personal engagement in various situations and events, and their observation of real-life occurrences.

For cognitive development to thrive, it's essential to have a diverse and ever-changing environment around the child, which allows for freedom to explore (through object-oriented play), as well as having ample free time and space for imaginative play.

Between the ages of 3 and 4, children amass a considerable amount of ideas and information about their environment. Nonetheless, these ideas are often disjointed and unrelated to one another. The child is in the process of attempting to establish connections and relationships between these ideas. This period also serves as the groundwork for the development of aesthetic appreciation of the world. It is a time of active formation of sensory cognition methods, as well as improvement in sensations and perceptions.

Cognition expands its scope to encompass not just objects and their actions, but also the attributes of those objects, including qualities like color, shape, size, and physical characteristics. This newfound knowledge equips children to analyze objects and phenomena based on specific attributes, allowing them to discern relationships of similarity, identity, and contrast, and perform tasks such as classification and seriation.

By the age of 4, a child's cognitive development undergoes a significant shift to a more advanced and distinct level compared to their previous stage. Speech emerges as a crucial tool for cognition, and their capacity to receive and accurately comprehend information conveyed through words experiences notable growth.

As children explore various objects, events, and phenomena, they not only develop the skills to analyze and compare but also to draw conclusions and identify patterns. They become adept at generalizing and specifying, organizing, and categorizing ideas and concepts. In this process, they experience a growing desire to shape their relationship with the world through creative expression.

The information a child accumulates about the world by the age of 6 serves as a substantial foundation for their ongoing cognitive growth. At this stage, the process of cognition entails a meaningful organization of information, recognizing that the world operates as a system where everything is interrelated.

Understanding this interconnectedness is a key aspect of a child's construction of a basic holistic perspective. This is achieved through comparisons, generalizations, reasoning, and the formulation of hypothetical statements, elementary conclusions, as well as predictions about potential developments of events.

At the age of six, a child's cognitive framework encompasses generalized concepts related to space and time, objects, phenomena, processes, their attributes, fundamental actions, critical relationships, numbers, shapes, language, and speech. During this phase, children cultivate a cognitive and nurturing disposition toward the world, characterized by a sense of wonder and curiosity, such as "The world is brimming with secrets and mysteries. I aspire to unravel them and protect my world."

In contrast to younger preschoolers who tend to pose isolated questions, older preschoolers are distinguished by a series of queries. This shift signifies a transition from transient, situation-specific cognitive expressions to more enduring cognitive behaviors.

A comprehensive theoretical examination of children's inquiries has been undertaken in Russian psychology by A.I. Sorokina. The author has compiled and analyzed an extensive body of knowledge from foreign scientific literature and delved into the perspectives of renowned scientists such as D. Locke, J. Selley, Hall, and J. Piaget with regards to the categorization of children's questions.

In A.I. Sorokina's study, three primary categories of questions have been identified based on the underlying motivations driving children to ask them. Questions in the first group are shaped by the desire for communication and active engagement, those in the second group stem from emotional experiences, and questions in the third group are fueled by the aspiration to acquire knowledge.

The motivations driving the formulation of questions vary, encompassing inquiries designed to grasp the principles of individual and societal conduct, as well as factual cognitive questions aimed at comprehending the world that surrounds us.

During the later preschool years, questions related to the environment are shaped not solely by visually observed objects but also by the child's eagerness to juxtapose past experiences with new ones. They seek similarities and differences, and aim to uncover connections and dependencies among objects. This inclination is evident in the more intricate verbal framing of their questions. Simultaneously, A.I. Sorokina underscores that it is the questions posed by adults to the child that serve as the initial stimulus, triggering the child's thought process and prompting their own questions to emerge.

The earliest manifestation of cognitive activity is curiosity. Externally, this is evident in various ways, such as a direct interest in new facts, fascination with intriguing phenomena, and the asking of questions to adults. It is also characterized by a positive emotional response when receiving fresh information. This illustrates preschoolers' inclination towards the external world, their sensory, and primarily practical approach to reality.

The primary prerequisite for sustaining this level of cognitive activity is a stimulating information-rich environment and the opportunity for hands-on engagement within it. Anything that contributes to enriching a child's sensory and practical experiences is beneficial, while anything that imparts pre-packaged knowledge before the child is ready to assimilate it can be obstructive.

Cognitive activity associated with the acquisition of knowledge and skills is essential for addressing cognitive challenges and pursuing intellectual accomplishments. The principal factors fostering the advancement of this cognitive level include integrating cognitive activity into the broader context of a child's life and the extent and manner in which adults, such as teachers and parents, express their cognitive activities.

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