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PEDAGOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RESOURCES OF SAFE USE OF THE INTERNET

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Abstract: The article explores the pedagogical aspects of ensuring the safety and development of the "Alpha generation" in the digital era. The author emphasizes the need to integrate digital literacy, media literacy, and cybersecurity education into the traditional school curriculum. The study highlights the impact of social networks on children's psychology, the risks of cyberbullying, misinformation, and misuse of personal data. Drawing on international experiences, particularly from Finland and the United Kingdom, the paper discusses effective approaches to fostering digital resilience and media awareness among students. The author argues that developing critical thinking, information analysis, and emotional intelligence in children forms the foundation of digital immunity. Furthermore, the paper underscores the importance of close cooperation between schools and families as a key pedagogical mechanism to protect children and guide them toward conscious and responsible behavior in the online environment.

Keywords. cybersecurity, digital literacy, media literacy, Alpha generation, digital pedagogy, cyberbullying, online safety, media education, digital environment, school-family cooperation.

The Internet is an information space that helps to express professional, business, creative and personal ideas and views for a person of the 21st century. The global network has become the most convenient means of implementing offline activities of almost all types and sectors in an online format. The information civilization of the 21st century has created a new digital generation - YouTubers, Instagramers, TikTokers and others.

In the 21st century, the socialization and education of children is closely linked to the digital environment. For this category of young people, called the "Alpha generation", the Internet is not only a source of information, but also a space for personal development, communication and self-expression. At the same time, the dangers of the online environment - cyberbullying, disinformation, psychological pressure and misuse of personal data - are placing new demands on the modern educational system.

The school has traditionally been responsible for academic education and the socialization of the child. Today, it is necessary to adapt to the realities of the digital world, to teach children to critically analyze information, use it safely and act consciously in the media environment. Every year in many countries of the world, the "Safer Internet Day" program can serve as an example of successful initiatives. As part of this initiative, schools hold lessons and events dedicated to the safe use of the Internet. In the UK, for example, as part of the National Cyber Security Strategy, digital literacy and cybersecurity lessons are being actively introduced in schools starting from primary grades. In Finland, known for its advanced education system, media literacy is included in the curriculum in various subjects, which allows students to form a holistic understanding of the media environment.

The times themselves demand that secondary schools adapt to the new conditions of the digital age. Because a modern school is not just a place to provide education, but also a center for preparing children for conscious activity in a digital environment. The UNESCO report emphasizes that in the digital world, educational institutions need to equip children with the skills to analyze information, check sources, and protect personal data [1].

In this sense, the educational directions of the school should now cover a number of media competencies. Including:

1. Media literacy - critical evaluation of information, recognition of fake information, understanding of social network algorithms;
2. Cybersecurity - protection of personal data, prevention of cyberbullying and online fraud;
3. 21st century skills - development of creativity, collaboration, emotional intelligence and culture of online communication are among them.

Judging by world experience, in the UK, digital literacy lessons have been introduced from primary grades as part of the National Cybersecurity Strategy, which teaches children to behave responsibly on the Internet [2]. In Finland, media literacy is integrated into all subjects, so students gain a holistic understanding of the media landscape [3].

As is known, social networks have become an integral part of children's lives. The impact of social networks includes a number of moral and psychological dangers aimed at the alpha generation. Social networks create opportunities for knowledge, communication and creativity, but at the same time, they affect the psyche and values of the child.

According to the results of the "#StatusOfMind" study by the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) of Great Britain, social networks increase depression, anxiety and low self-esteem among young people [4]. Platforms such as Instagram increase the tendency of young people to "compare themselves with others" through idealized images.

According to UNICEF, every third child in the world is a victim of cyberbullying [5]. These figures indicate the need to strengthen the system of protecting children in the digital environment. Cyberbullying has a negative impact not only on mental health, but also on social isolation and educational performance.

In addition, social network algorithms put the child in an "echo chamber" by suggesting certain content. As a result, young people only accept one way of thinking, critical thinking fades, and diversity of views in the media space is limited.

It should not be forgotten that media literacy can act as a key to digital immunity. That is, the education system should develop "mental immunity" in children. This means, first of all, the ability to analyze information, check sources and resist disinformation. Therefore, the Finnish experience shows that media literacy is taught not only in journalism, but also as a transversal skill within all disciplines.

The main task of media education is to transform children from information consumers into active and responsible citizens. As a result, the child will be able to navigate the Internet safely, recognize dubious information and identify a reliable source. Schools should also pay attention to the development of emotional intelligence in children. Because negative thoughts, insults and emotional reactions to "likes" in the digital environment often derail the child's psyche.

How does the family and school cooperate in this process? Today, the school and the family must work together for the education of the child in the digital environment. While the school provides the child with knowledge and skills, the parent should monitor, explain and support his digital activities.

A European Commission report states that 57% of children spend too much time in front of screens, which can lead to anxiety and mental fatigue[6]. That is why constant communication and cooperation between parents and teachers are essential.

While schools develop media literacy in children, parents reinforce it in practice. The main goal in this process is not to isolate the child from the Internet, but to teach him to use it safely and beneficially.

The digital world is accelerating the development of children, but its dangers are also increasing. Therefore, schools need to introduce digital and media literacy as a main focus in addition to traditional educational functions.

Because a media literate child:

1. Correctly analyzes information and checks its source;
2. Protects personal information on the Internet;
3. Immune to fake information and cyberbullying;
4. Thinks critically and feels socially responsible.

Cooperation between the family, school and public organizations should become the only effective platform that ensures the spiritual and psychological safety of the child in the digital world.

Conclusion

In short. Ultimately, the goal is not to isolate children from the digital world, but to provide them with a safe and effective path to navigate. This requires not only teaching and supervision, but also a deep understanding of how the worldview of the modern child is shaped, where each of the influencing forces - family, school and social networks - has its own unique, but closely interconnected, place.

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