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IMPROVING FAMILY–PRESCHOOL COOPERATION IN THE SPIRITUAL AND MORAL EDUCATION OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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Abstract: This article examines the pedagogical significance of cooperation between the family and preschool educational organization in the spiritual and moral education of preschool children. Spiritual and moral education begins in the family and continues systematically within the preschool environment. Therefore, the consistency of educational requirements, personal examples, communication styles, values, and behavioural expectations in these two environments plays an important role in the formation of a child's personality. The article analyses the main principles, forms, and methods of effective family–preschool cooperation. Particular attention is paid to parental pedagogical competence, individual work with families, interactive meetings, joint educational projects, national traditions, moral conversations, role-playing activities, and digital communication. The study also identifies several barriers to cooperation, including parents' limited time, insufficient pedagogical knowledge, formal communication, and differences in educational approaches. Practical recommendations are proposed for creating a systematic, child-centred, and mutually responsible model of cooperation. The findings indicate that continuous collaboration between preschool teachers and families contributes to the development of kindness, honesty, responsibility, respect, empathy, patriotism, and other socially significant qualities in preschool children.

Keywords: preschool education, spiritual education, moral education, family, preschool educational organization, cooperation, parental competence, values, child development, educational environment.

The preschool period is one of the most important stages in the development of a child's personality. During this period, children begin to understand social norms, distinguish acceptable behaviour from unacceptable behaviour, establish relationships with adults and peers, and acquire initial ideas about kindness, justice, honesty, responsibility, respect, and mutual assistance. The values learned during preschool childhood often become the basis of a person's future worldview and behaviour.

Spiritual and moral education cannot be limited to the transmission of rules or instructions. It is a continuous pedagogical process through which children learn to understand themselves, respect others, control their emotions, fulfil simple responsibilities, and act in accordance with moral norms. The effectiveness of this process largely depends on the consistency between the family environment and the preschool educational organization.

The family is the child's first social and educational environment. Children observe the relationships between family members, imitate adults' speech and behaviour, and gradually adopt the values practised at home. A preschool educational organization, in turn, enriches the child's social experience, teaches cooperation with peers, and creates conditions for participation in collective activities. When the family and preschool organization work according to common educational goals, the child receives clear and consistent moral guidance.

However, when the requirements of parents and educators differ significantly, children may experience uncertainty. For example, if politeness and responsibility are encouraged in preschool but ignored at home, it becomes difficult for the child to adopt these qualities as stable behavioural norms. Therefore, improving cooperation between families and preschool educational organizations is an important pedagogical condition for the spiritual and moral development of children.

Spiritual education refers to the development of a child's inner world, value orientation, cultural awareness, emotional sensitivity, respect for national and universal values, and understanding of human dignity. Moral education is associated with the formation of behavioural norms, moral habits, responsibility, honesty, discipline, fairness, kindness, and respectful communication.

These two directions are closely interconnected. Spiritual values influence the child's attitude towards people and the surrounding world, while moral education helps to transform these values into everyday actions. A child does not become kind simply by learning the meaning of kindness. Kindness is developed through regular experiences of caring, sharing, helping, listening, and showing compassion.

L. S. Vygotsky emphasised that children's psychological and social development takes place through interaction with adults and peers. From this perspective, moral qualities are also formed in a social environment. Children learn moral behaviour by observing others, participating in joint activities, receiving feedback, and reflecting on simple life situations.

U. Bronfenbrenner's ecological approach also demonstrates that child development is influenced by the interaction of several environments. The family and preschool organization are among the most immediate environments surrounding a preschool child. Their cooperation creates a unified educational space and strengthens the positive influence of both institutions.

The following principles are especially important in spiritual and moral education:

- respect for the child's personality and dignity;
- unity of moral requirements in the family and preschool organization;
- reliance on positive examples;
- age-appropriate explanation of moral concepts;
- connection between knowledge and practical behaviour;
- respect for national traditions and universal human values;
- continuous communication between parents and educators;
- consideration of each child's individual characteristics.

The family plays a decisive role in shaping a child's first moral experiences. Before entering a preschool organization, a child learns basic patterns of communication from parents and other family members. The way adults speak, solve problems, express emotions, and treat one another becomes a model for the child.

Parents influence moral development through both direct and indirect methods. Direct influence includes explanations, advice, encouragement, requirements, and discussions about behaviour. Indirect influence occurs through personal example, family relationships, emotional atmosphere, daily routines, and shared activities.

For example, children learn respect when adults listen to one another without interruption. They learn responsibility when they are assigned simple household tasks. They learn compassion when family members help elderly relatives, support people in difficulty, or care for animals and nature. Consequently, spiritual and moral education becomes more effective when values are demonstrated through everyday actions.

Excessive punishment, inconsistent requirements, neglect, and conflicts between adults may negatively affect a child's moral development. A child who regularly observes aggression may begin to use aggressive behaviour in communication with peers. Similarly, if parents demand honesty from the child but behave dishonestly themselves, verbal instruction loses its educational value.

Therefore, preschool teachers should not only work with children but also help parents understand the psychological and pedagogical characteristics of early childhood.

The preschool educational organization provides children with a wider social environment. In this setting, they learn to communicate with peers, wait for their turn, follow common rules, participate in group activities, share materials, resolve disagreements, and respect the interests of others.

Preschool teachers guide children's moral development through:

- educational conversations;
- fairy tales and literary works;
- role-playing games;
- dramatization;
- collective creative activities;
- observation of nature and social life;
- moral problem situations;
- personal example;
- positive reinforcement;
- individual conversations;
- cultural and national events.

Play is especially important because it allows children to understand moral relations through practical experience. During role-playing games such as "Family," "Hospital," "Guest," "Shop," or "Preschool," children reproduce social roles and learn the rules of respectful interaction.

Literary works also have significant educational potential. Fairy tales, stories, proverbs, and poems help children understand the consequences of positive and negative actions. However, teachers should not merely read a story. They should ask children questions, discuss the characters' behaviour, encourage children to express opinions, and connect the story with real-life situations.

Family–preschool cooperation is a partnership based on mutual respect, trust, responsibility, and common educational goals. Parents and preschool teachers should not view one another as separate or competing participants. Both sides are responsible for the child's well-being and development.

Effective cooperation allows educators to obtain information about the child's family environment, habits, interests, emotional state, and individual needs. Parents, in turn, learn about the child's behaviour in the group, communication with peers, achievements, and difficulties.

The main objectives of cooperation include:

1. establishing common approaches to moral education;
2. increasing parents' pedagogical knowledge;
3. providing psychological and methodological support to families;
4. involving parents in preschool activities;
5. preventing behavioural and communication problems;
6. creating a consistent spiritual and moral environment;
7. supporting each child according to individual needs.

Cooperation should not be limited to occasional parent meetings or the delivery of administrative information. It should become an integral part of the preschool educational process.

Individual consultations allow teachers to discuss a child's behaviour, emotional needs, achievements, and difficulties privately with parents. Such conversations should be respectful, factual, and solution-oriented. Teachers should avoid labelling children or blaming parents. It is more effective to analyse a specific situation and jointly identify appropriate educational strategies.

Traditional parent meetings can be improved through interactive methods. Instead of delivering only lectures, educators may organize discussions, case studies, question-and-answer sessions, short training exercises, and group problem-solving activities.

Possible meeting topics include:

- "The role of personal example in a child's moral development";
- "How to teach responsibility without excessive punishment";
- "Developing respectful communication in the family";
- "The influence of digital media on children's behaviour";
- "National traditions as a means of spiritual education."

Joint activities involving children, parents, and teachers strengthen emotional relationships and create positive shared experiences. Such activities may include family reading days, creative exhibitions, environmental campaigns, charity events, national holiday celebrations, theatre performances, and sports competitions.

For example, a "Good Deeds Week" project can encourage families to perform simple acts of kindness together. Children may help elderly relatives, care for plants, share toys, or prepare gifts for others. These actions can later be discussed in the preschool group.

Family projects promote active parental participation. Each family may prepare a small presentation, poster, photograph collection, or creative work on topics such as:

- "The traditions of our family";
- "Our family values";
- "Good deeds in our home";
- "Respect for elders";
- "Our contribution to environmental protection."

Such projects help children understand their family identity while developing respect for the traditions of other families.

Workshops can increase parents' competence in child development and education. Teachers may demonstrate methods of reading stories, discussing moral situations, managing children's emotions, resolving conflicts, and encouraging independent behaviour.

A workshop should include practical exercises. For example, parents can analyse a situation in which two children want the same toy and discuss how an adult can guide them towards a peaceful solution.

Digital tools provide convenient opportunities for maintaining regular contact with families. Teachers may share recommendations, photographs of educational activities, short educational videos, electronic questionnaires, and information about upcoming events.

Nevertheless, digital communication should be used carefully. Children's privacy must be protected, and online communication should not replace face-to-face interaction. Messages should remain professional, respectful, and directly related to the child's education and development.

During the planning stage, the preschool organization should prepare an annual or quarterly cooperation programme. The programme must include specific topics, responsible persons, expected outcomes, and evaluation criteria.

The implementation stage should combine individual, group, traditional, and interactive forms of cooperation. Activities should consider parents' schedules and avoid unnecessary formalism.

At the evaluation stage, educators should examine changes in children's behaviour. Indicators may include the ability to share, help others, follow rules, express emotions appropriately, apologise, demonstrate responsibility, and show respect for adults and peers.

Despite its importance, cooperation may face several difficulties. Some parents have limited time because of employment or family responsibilities. Others believe that education is entirely the responsibility of the preschool organization. In some cases, teachers communicate with parents only when a child has behavioural problems. This creates tension and reduces trust.

Another challenge is the difference between family educational approaches. Some parents rely on strict control, while others allow almost unlimited freedom. These differences may make it difficult to establish common educational requirements.

Digital dependence may also weaken direct interaction between children and parents. When adults spend considerable time using smartphones, children receive less emotional attention and fewer opportunities for meaningful conversation.

To overcome these challenges, preschool organizations should:

- provide flexible forms of participation;
- communicate with parents regularly, not only during problems;
- recognise the strengths and positive experiences of each family;
- avoid criticism and authoritarian communication;
- offer short and practical pedagogical recommendations;
- involve fathers, grandparents, and other family members;
- ensure confidentiality;
- create a welcoming and inclusive environment.

Spiritual and moral education produces sustainable results only when children regularly experience the values being taught. A single conversation about kindness is insufficient if the child does not see kindness in adult behaviour. Similarly, instructions about respect are ineffective when adults communicate aggressively or ignore the child's opinions.

The effectiveness of family–preschool cooperation depends not on the number of organized events but on their educational quality. Formal meetings, repetitive lectures, and one-sided communication may not significantly influence parental practices. Cooperation becomes effective when parents participate actively, reflect on their behaviour, exchange experiences, and apply recommendations in everyday family life.

The teacher's professional communication culture is also essential. Parents are more likely to cooperate when they feel respected and understood. The educator should recognise that each family has its own traditions, economic conditions, lifestyle, and educational experience. Therefore, cooperation must be differentiated and based on partnership rather than judgement.

National customs, family traditions, folklore, proverbs, stories, and celebrations can serve as valuable resources for spiritual and moral education. At the same time, these resources should be connected with universal values such as human dignity, fairness, tolerance, peace, care, and responsibility.

To improve cooperation in the spiritual and moral education of preschool children, the following measures are recommended:

1. Develop a unified family–preschool programme for spiritual and moral education.
2. Identify parents' pedagogical needs through questionnaires and individual conversations.
3. Organize regular interactive workshops rather than relying only on traditional meetings.

4. Create family projects focused on kindness, responsibility, respect, and national traditions.
5. Provide parents with short, clear, and practical recommendations.
6. Encourage parents and children to read and discuss moral stories together.
7. Use role-playing games and problem situations during joint activities.
8. Establish consistent requirements for children's behaviour at home and in preschool.
9. Share positive observations about children, not only information about difficulties.
10. Evaluate cooperation through changes in children's behaviour and parental participation.

The spiritual and moral education of preschool children is a shared responsibility of the family and the preschool educational organization. The family provides the first moral experience and emotional foundation, while the preschool organization expands the child's social relationships and systematically develops moral knowledge, feelings, and behaviour.

Effective cooperation requires mutual respect, trust, regular communication, unified educational expectations, and active parental participation. Individual consultations, interactive meetings, family projects, joint events, pedagogical workshops, and appropriate digital communication can strengthen this partnership.

The main criterion of successful cooperation is not the number of meetings or activities but positive changes in the child's daily behaviour. When children demonstrate kindness, responsibility, honesty, empathy, respect, and readiness to cooperate, the common educational efforts of the family and preschool organization can be considered effective. Therefore, establishing a systematic and child-centred partnership between parents and educators is one of the most important conditions for raising spiritually mature and morally responsible individuals.

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