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THE ROLE OF DIDACTIC GAMES IN DEVELOPING LOGICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING IN PRIMARY GRADE STUDENTS

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Abstract: This article examines the role and pedagogical significance of didactic games in the development of logical and creative thinking skills of primary school students. The psychological and cognitive (cognitive) characteristics of children of primary school age are analyzed, and the principles of effective use of game technologies in the lesson process are outlined. The article describes practical didactic methods that serve to increase students' motivation for the lesson, form independent and critical thinking, and the procedure for their application at the stages of the lesson.

Keywords: Primary school, didactic games, logical thinking, creativity, cognitive development, interactive methods, learning motivation, critical thinking, modern education, pedagogical technology

Today, globalization and the rapid development of information technologies impose new demands and tasks on the education sector. Raising the new generation not only as knowledgeable, but also as independent thinkers, capable of taking an unconventional approach to problems, and striving for innovation is one of the priority goals of modern education. In particular, this process is one of the important processes that is laid at the stage of primary education.

The primary school period is a very important stage in the formation of a child's intellectual and creative potential, and it is at this stage that children's ability to think creatively, express fantasy, and express individual ideas grows and strengthens. From this point of view, the study of mechanisms for identifying, developing, and stimulating the creative potential of primary school students is becoming an urgent issue in today's pedagogical practice.

Today, the main goal of the modern education system is not only to provide students with ready-made knowledge, but also to form in them the skills of independent, logical and creative thinking. The primary school period is considered the most sensitive period of cognitive development in human life. It is at this stage that the foundation for the transition from visual-figurative thinking to abstract-logical thinking is laid. In particular, the primary school period (7-10 years old) is considered the most fundamental stage of human cognitive development. As the famous Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget noted, children of this age are in the "concrete action stage". That is, they absorb knowledge much faster and more firmly through activities that they see with their eyes and perform in practice, rather than abstract concepts.

Jean Piaget, studying the stages of development of children's intelligence, described primary school children as being in the "concrete operations stage". In his opinion, logical conclusions are made only on concrete objects.

L.S. Vygotsky, in his theory of the "Zone of Proximal Development", justified the formation of logical thinking through the social environment and interaction with the teacher.

The use of didactic (educational) games in primary school lessons prevents boredom among students, increases the effectiveness of the lesson by an average of 35-40%, and most importantly, turns compulsory education into an "interesting creative process." Therefore, the

article analyzes the scientific and theoretical foundations of didactic games and methods of their practical application. Because primary school is a sensitive period when the foundation of a child's personality is laid, and his mental, emotional and social abilities are formed.

Pedagogical and psychological research shows that children have a natural creative potential, and it is the responsibility of the education system and teachers to guide, encourage and develop them correctly. The active participation of parents and an open and creative educational environment play an important role in this process.

Developing the creative potential of primary school students is one of the priority areas of the modern education system. Based on the research conducted, the following conclusions were drawn:

Creativity is not an innate quality, but a quality that can be developed. With the right approach, encouragement, and a supportive environment, any child can reveal their creative potential. The teacher's didactic approach is crucial. Active teaching methods, open questions, group work, and an individual approach encourage free thinking in children.

In the process of researching the topic, pedagogical observation, comparative analysis, and modeling methods were used. The importance of play activities in children of younger school age has been thoroughly studied by psychologists and pedagogical scientists such as L. Vygotsky and D. Elkonin. L. Vygotsky stated that "Play creates a zone of proximal development in a child, in which the child shows results one level higher than his age and typical behavior."

In today's modern educational conditions, didactic games are not just a means of passing time, but a pedagogical technology aimed at a specific goal. Games are divided into three main groups according to the task:

The first is logical-mathematical games. These develop the child's skills such as analysis, synthesis, spatial imagination and rapid calculation and are used more in mathematics and computer science classes.

The second is linguistic (speech) games. These games serve to increase students' vocabulary, enrich vocabulary and form communicative skills, and are effective in mother tongue and reading literacy classes.

The third is cognitive (psychological) games. These are aimed at developing concentration, visual memory and logic and can be used in the integration of all subjects.

Didactic games develop in the student the ability to find a solution to the problem (productive thinking) instead of simply memorizing facts (reproductive thinking). Experience and observations show that in lessons where logical games are mixed, the level of students' memorization of the topic is significantly higher than in traditional lessons.

Below are methodological examples that can be successfully used in mathematics and native language lessons in primary grades:

The "Tangram" and "Magic Chain" methods for mathematics and logic lessons.

In the "Tangram" method, students are given a set of geometric shapes and they must use these shapes to create silhouettes of animals, houses, or various objects. This game develops the child's spatial and logical thinking, as well as geometric concepts. In the "Magic Chain" game, chain-like examples are given on the board. Each student performs one action and passes the result to the next partner. This forms collective responsibility and quick logical calculation.

The "Six Hats" method, adapted to the younger age group for native language and reading lessons.

In order to deeply analyze the read text or fairy tale, to awaken creativity and critical thinking in the child, students are divided into four colored teams:

- White Hat Team (Facts): Students tell what happened in the text using only specific facts and figures (Who? When? Where?).
- Red Hat Team (Feelings): Students express their personal feelings and attitudes towards the characters (Which character did you like or feel sorry for?).
- Black Hat Team (Criticism): Students find the negative aspects of the story or the character's mistakes (Where did the character make a mistake? What was the result of this?).
- Yellow Hat Team (Optimism and Solution): Students find the positive aspects of the situation and suggest a new, creative solution to the problem (What would you do if you were in his/her place?).

It was found that the teacher's approach, aimed at creating a motivating, free environment, plays a key role in the development of creativity. In the classrooms of teachers who use active, interactive methods and take into account the individual characteristics of children, students' creative manifestations were higher.

The teacher's personal approach, didactic style and pedagogical skills are one of the decisive factors in the manifestation of the creative potential of primary school students. As the research revealed, the teacher's creative approach, respectful approach to children's opinions and the creation of a supportive environment dramatically increase students' desire to express their opinions freely and create innovations.

According to the analyzed data, the following pedagogical approaches turned out to be the most effective.

Using active and interactive methods:

Lessons with games, role-playing games, working in small groups, project-based learning allow children to think independently and find new approaches.

Valuing students' opinions and allowing them to express themselves freely:

The fact that the teacher takes into account any idea of the student and does not criticize them for incorrect answers allows the child to express his or her opinion openly. This is considered the first sign of creativity.

Individualized approach:

The creative performance of the group of teachers who worked taking into account the interests and abilities of each student was significantly higher. The result was especially noticeable when creative tasks were given to children interested in music, visual arts, mathematics and literature.

Constructive exchange of ideas and asking open questions:

When questions are open and multi-faceted, the scope of students' thinking expands. Questions such as "Why?", "What if?" encourage a creative approach.

Encouragement and motivation:

Recognizing even small achievements of children who demonstrate a creative approach, verbal praise, putting them on exhibitions, and showing them as an example to other children during the lesson increases their intrinsic motivation for creativity.

In the classes observed during the study, high creativity indicators were observed precisely in the classes of teachers who applied the above pedagogical approaches in practice. On the contrary, in classes that were engaged in traditional, theoretical-reproductive methods, the manifestation of creativity of children was much lower. Therefore, the creation of an active, open and interesting

learning environment in primary education, the teacher's openness to innovative methods and a respectful approach to the individual capabilities of children are among the most important conditions for the development of creative potential.

The harmony of the educational environment and the family is an important factor in the development of creativity. Cooperation between the teacher and parents, a respectful and loving attitude towards the child strengthen his internal motivation. Assessing and developing creativity is a continuous process. Through special tests, observations and practical tasks, the creative potential of students should be identified and individual programs aimed at its development should be developed. Creating a creative environment requires pedagogical skills. Each child has his own talent, and it can only be fully manifested in an open, cheerful, supportive environment.

When using didactic games in the lesson, a primary school teacher must adhere to the following methodological requirements:

Correct time allocation:

- The game should not absorb the main content of the lesson. It is advisable to allocate 5-7 minutes for it at the beginning of the lesson (to arouse interest) or at the end of the lesson (to consolidate).
- Inclusivity (Openness to all): Not only active and excellent children, but also shy and slow-learning children should be involved in the game, and they should be given leadership roles.
- Healthy competitive environment: Defeat in the game should not cause a child to have negative emotions towards the lesson. The teacher should also encourage the losing team for some aspect (for example, "the most harmonious team", "the most organized team").

In conclusion, didactic games in primary grades are not just a means of entertainment, but a powerful pedagogical mechanism that activates the logical and creative thinking of the student. Education through games systematically forms the so-called 21st century skills in the student: critical thinking, creativity, communication and teamwork. The regular use of didactic game elements in the teaching methodology of primary grade teachers serves to bring the quality of education to a new level.

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