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DEVELOPING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN THROUGH DIGITAL GAMES

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Abstract: This article discusses the pedagogical and psychological foundations of developing emotional intelligence in preschool children through digital games. The potential of interactive digital games in developing children's skills in understanding their own emotions, understanding the emotional state of others, expressing their emotions correctly, and managing their behavior is analyzed. Practical recommendations for the targeted use of digital games in preschool educational organizations are also developed.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, preschool age, digital technologies, interactive games, emotional development, emotion management, social-emotional competence, pedagogical technology.

Today, in the preschool education system, ensuring not only intellectual, but also socio-emotional development of children is one of the important pedagogical tasks. During preschool age, a child develops the skills to understand his own emotions, understand the experiences of others, communicate, and manage his behavior in various situations. The concept of emotional intelligence is associated with the ability to perceive emotions, understand their content, and use emotional information in thinking and behavior. In the scientific approach of P. Salovey and J. Mayer, emotional intelligence encompasses the ability to perceive emotions, use them in the thinking process, and understand and manage emotions. The use of digital technologies in preschool education allows children to present various emotional situations in a visual and interactive way. For example, games aimed at identifying the facial expressions of characters, explaining the feelings of participants in the event, and choosing the right solution in problem situations can enrich children's emotional experience.

Preschool children experience a variety of emotional states in their daily lives, such as joy, sadness, fear, surprise, anger, and shyness. However, they are not always able to explain the reason for their feelings or have difficulty expressing them in a socially acceptable way. For example, they may not be able to share a toy with a peer, get angry after a defeat, be afraid of a new situation, or not notice that a friend is upset. Therefore, developing children's skills in recognizing, naming, explaining, and managing emotions is one of the important areas of preschool education. Showing children different facial expressions, tones of voice, everyday life situations, and problem situations through digital games helps children understand the differences between emotions. Developing emotional intelligence is not limited to memorizing the names of emotions. This process involves the interrelated development of skills for understanding emotions, understanding their causes, responding to the situations of others, and managing one's own behavior.

It is advisable to develop emotional intelligence in preschool children based on the following structural areas:

1. Emotional awareness. The child recognizes basic emotions such as joy, sadness, fear, surprise, and anger through facial expressions, body movements, and situations. For example, he determines why the hero is sad.
2. Expressing feelings. The child learns to express his emotional state through words. For example, he builds sentences like “I am sad because my toy broke.”
3. Empathy. The child learns to understand the emotional state of another person, pay attention to his experiences, and offer help.
4. Emotional self-regulation. When a child is angry, they practice using techniques such as deep breathing, calming down, asking for help, or explaining the situation verbally.
5. Social-emotional communication. The child learns to cooperate with peers, wait their turn, share toys, and resolve conflicts peacefully. These areas are closely related, and each of them should be given special attention when designing digital games.

Pedagogical potential of digital games in the development of emotional intelligence:

Digital games allow children to understand various emotional situations through interactive images, animations, voice tasks, choices and feedback. Their pedagogical potential is manifested in the following:

Expression: facial expressions and actions that express emotions help the child to more clearly perceive abstract concepts.

Active participation: the child does not limit himself to watching ready-made information, but answers questions, chooses a situation and helps the hero.

Repetition of situations: by re-enacting the same or similar emotional situations, the child has the opportunity to compare different responses. At the same time, digital games should not replace the child's real communication, action games, listening to fairy tales and direct interaction with peers. The most important result is not the correct completion of the task on the screen, but the ability to apply the skills learned in the game in everyday life.

Examples of practical digital games include:

1. The game "World of Emotions".

Purpose: to form in children the ability to recognize and name basic emotions.

Content: the screen shows the facial expressions of the characters: happy, sad, scared, surprised and angry. The child chooses the name of the appropriate emotion and explains its signs.

Pedagogical questions: “What changes are there in the eyes and mouth of the character?”, “What can he be happy about?”, “When do you have such an emotion?”

Expected result: the child learns to distinguish between basic emotions, name them and associate them with simple reasons.

2. The game “Help the character”.

Purpose: to develop empathy, sympathy and helping skills.

Content: a short animation depicts the character losing his toy, not getting along with his friend or feeling lonely. The child determines the character’s situation and chooses a way to help him.

Pedagogical questions: "What is the hero feeling right now?", "How can we help him?", "What would you do if you were his friend?"

Expected result: the child learns how to pay attention to the situation of another person, show sympathy and offer help. Through these digital games, the emotional intelligence of preschool children develops and the mechanism of empathy develops in children.

In conclusion, the development of emotional intelligence in preschool children is important for their personal development, social adaptation, relationships with peers and further educational activities. Digital games have the ability to visually express emotions, model various life situations

and involve children in active thinking. However, the presence of digital tools does not in itself ensure emotional development. For this, games must be selected on the basis of a clear pedagogical goal, guided by the educator and reinforced by direct communication. Another important aspect of this direction is that the emotional world of each child is unique. While some children express their emotions freely, others may need more time, encouragement, and pedagogical support to do so. Therefore, in developing emotional intelligence, the priority is not to compare children with each other, but to support positive changes in the individual development of each child. In general, the purposeful, moderate, and scientifically-pedagogical use of digital games in preschool education creates an important opportunity for the development of children's emotional literacy, empathy, self-control, and effective communication skills. However, the effectiveness of the methodology should be assessed through regular pedagogical observation and practical research. After all, teaching a child to understand their emotions is not only helping them understand themselves today, but also helping them to understand themselves, others, and the world around them more deeply in the future. Digital games can serve as an effective pedagogical tool in this complex and delicate process, opening the way to the child's emotional world, encouraging him to think, feel, and appreciate human relationships.

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