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# ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAY SPACE AS A FACTOR IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN'S PERSONAL POTENTIAL

Анотація. У статті досліджуються теоретико-методологічні основи організації ігрового простору дітей дошкільного віку та його вплив на розвиток особистісного потенціалу. Ігровий простір розглядається як комплексна система умов, що поєднує соціальні, психологічні та предметно-просторові аспекти розвитку дитини, створює можливості для прояву самостійності, ініціативності, творчої активності та формування соціальних навичок. Показано, що якісно організований ігровий простір сприяє розвитку когнітивних здібностей, пізнавальної мотивації, емоційного інтелекту, моральних орієнтирів та самосвідомості дошкільників, впливає на розвиток індивідуальних можливостей дитини у різних сферах людського буття, формування внутрішньої свободи, самостійності та відповідальності у взаєминах із соціальним і природним середовищем. З'ясовано, що сучасна організація ігрового простору дошкільників має забезпечувати цілісний підхід до збереження і зміцнення фізичного, психічного, соціального та духовного здоров'я дитини. Доведено, що реалізація дитиноцентрованого підходу у створенні ігрового простору передбачає не лише надання дитині можливості бути активним суб'єктом власної ігрової діяльності, а й моделювання умов, що стимулюють ініціативу, самовираження та усвідомлення власних можливостей. Представлено результати фокус-групового опитування вихователів закладів дошкільної освіти, яке засвідчило, що в реальній практиці організація ігрового простору часто не відповідає його потенціалу як засобу розвитку особистості; спостерігається обмежена варіативність діяльності дітей, недостатнє врахування індивідуальних потреб та активності дошкільників. Констатовано, що проектування ігрового простору є безперервним процесом і багаторівневою системою дій, спрямованих на створення рефлексивно-розвивального середовища в закладі дошкільної освіти, у якому дитина має можливість вільного вибору видів діяльності, переходу між ними, а також розвитку гнучкості, відкритості й партнерської взаємодії з дорослими й однолітками. Це створює можливість враховувати динаміку потреб дітей дошкільного віку у створенні якісного розвивального середовища та віднаходити оптимальні шляхи їх задоволення. Підкреслено необхідність врахування вікових, соціальних і психологічних особливостей дітей, а також зонування, мобільності та варіативності середовища закладу дошкільної освіти. Ігровий простір у сюжетно-рольових, образно-рольових та продуктивних ігор формує комунікативні, емоційні та когнітивні компетентності, готує дітей до навчання в школі та сприяє їхній адаптації у соціальному середовищі. Визначено, що перспективними напрямами подальших досліджень є вивчення впливу якості ігрового простору на розвиток індивідуальних особливостей, пізнавальних та інтелектуальних здібностей, творчого потенціалу і креативності дошкільників, а також на їхню готовність до шкільного навчання та успішність адаптації.

**Ключові слова:** ігровий простір, гра, дитина дошкільного віку, особистісний потенціал, психічний розвиток, соціальна активність і взаємодія, соціалізація, дитиноцентрованість.

Abstract. The article examines the theoretical and methodological foundations of the organization of play space for preschool children and its impact on the development of personal potential. The play space is considered as a complex system of conditions that combines social, psychological and subject-spatial aspects of child development, creates opportunities for the manifestation of independence, initiative, creative activity and the formation of social skills. It has been shown that a well-organized play space promotes the development of cognitive abilities, cognitive motivation, emotional intelligence, moral guidelines and self-awareness of preschoolers, influences the development of individual capabilities of the child in various spheres of human existence, the formation of internal freedom, independence and responsibility in relations with the social and natural environment. It has been found that the modern organization of preschoolers' play space should provide a holistic approach to the preservation and strengthening of the child's physical, mental, social and spiritual health. It is proved that the implementation of a child-centered approach to creating a play space involves not only providing the child with the

opportunity to be an active subject of his or her own play activities, but also modeling conditions that stimulate initiative, self-expression and awareness of their own capabilities. The article presents the results of a focus group survey of preschool educators, which showed that in real practice the organization of play space often does not meet its potential as a means of personal development; there is a limited variability of children's activities, insufficient consideration of individual needs and activity of preschoolers. It is stated that the design of the play space is a continuous process and a multi-level system of actions aimed at creating a reflective and developmental environment in preschool education institution, in which the child has the opportunity to freely choose activities, move between them, as well as develop flexibility, openness and partnership with adults and peers. This makes it possible to take into account the dynamics of preschool children's needs in creating a quality developmental environment and find the best ways to meet them. The need to take into account the age, social and psychological characteristics of children, as well as zoning, mobility and variability of the environment of preschool education is emphasized. The play space within the framework of story-role, imaginative-role and productive games forms social, communicative, emotional and cognitive competencies, prepares children for school and promotes their adaptation in the social environment. It has been determined that promising areas for further research are the study of the impact of the quality of the play space on the development of individual characteristics, cognitive and intellectual abilities, creativity and creativity of preschoolers, as well as on their readiness for schooling and successful adaptation.

**Keywords:** play space, game, preschool child, personal potential, mental development, social activity and interaction, socialization, child-centeredness.

Introduction. In modern conditions, significant changes are taking place in the content of children's lives, which is due to unstable social, economic, socio-political and cultural circumstances. The problem of preschool children's play space is of particular importance in the context of the need to implement a child-centered approach to the organization of the educational environment, which would create opportunities for the full provision and support of the processes of personal growth of preschool children in the difficult conditions of the present military time. There is a growing need to define the theoretical and methodological foundations of high-quality design of the play space, which ensures the development of children's personal potential, the formation of their value orientations and social activity. Despite the increased attention of scientists to this issue, most studies are narrowly focused, which leads to fragmentation of the practical implementation of the results. The issues of a systematic approach to the organization of the play space remain insufficiently developed, which makes it difficult to harmonize theoretical provisions with the practice of preschool education. Therefore, the study of the features of the quality of preschool children's play space in terms of its ability to influence the development of their personal potential is an urgent task of modern psychological and pedagogical science and practice. We consider it expedient to structure the theoretical and methodological approach to the study of play space, generalize views on the role of play and play space in the development of preschool children's personality, as well as identify the relationship between play activities, educational environment and social formation of preschool children, which will be the purpose of this publication.

Theoretical foundations of research. The current global changes taking place in the world in general and in Ukraine in particular have a significant impact on the child's living space. They determine the peculiarities of their play activities, which, in turn, affects their mental development. Social transformations necessitate a rethinking of the quality of the organization of play space, the content of play, and the nature of preschoolers' communication. This actualizes the need to study the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of preschool children's mental development.

The preschool period is a stage of initial socialization of a child, their entry into the world of culture and universal values. At this time, personal potential is formed as a set of individual abilities, natural inclinations, skills and readiness for further development. This process is realized through various types of activities - play, cognitive, creative, labor and educational. It is during this period that self-esteem, cognitive motivation, social skills, and emotional intelligence are formed. The child's acquisition of life competence, mastery of knowledge about themselves and the world around him/her, formation of moral values and skills to apply the acquired knowledge in practice depend on the quality organization of the play space. It provides opportunities to engage preschoolers in various activities. Activation of cognitive processes, mental development and formation of the child's personal potential are directly related to the level of participation in play activities. Obviously, a well-organized play space is a powerful resource for the development of a preschooler's personality, which requires special attention from teachers and parents.

In modern studies (O. Kononko, I. Martynenko, T. Pirozhenko, etc.), play space is interpreted as an integrated phenomenon - a system of conditions and situations created for the child's independent activity, development of their cognitive, practical and creative abilities. The play space is an important means of organizing the preschooler's life, promotes their purposeful cognition of the world around him/her, development of creativity, social competence and formation of an active life position.

Given that the preschool period is characterized by the presence of many sensitive phases of development, the play space should be designed to create conditions for the formation of the foundations of the future personality. These are the years of intensive mental and personal development, the formation of new mental qualities. The important needs of a child of this age are communication, recognition, respect and independence. At this time, play, drawing, construction, modeling and application acquire the characteristics of independent activities. Thus, the play space simultaneously influences both the formation of the personality and the development of its activities.

The play space is a model of social interaction in which a child learns the norms and values of society, learns to build interpersonal relationships, make decisions, and take responsibility for his or her own actions. Through play, a natural connection is established between the child's personal experience and the social environment, which contributes to his or her harmonious adaptation to the conditions of social life, even in times of crisis. The preschooler's play space can be seen as a multicomponent structure that combines spatial and subject, social and psychological aspects of development. Its diversity, flexibility, and accessibility significantly affect the formation of such qualities as intelligence, purposefulness, efficiency, life competence, optimism, responsibility, and productivity. Instead, the imperfect or unsystematic organization of the play space limits the child's cognitive abilities, inhibits the realization of his or her individual development trajectory, which negatively affects the formation of personal potential. In such conditions, the full development of the emotional, volitional and value spheres is not ensured, which hinders the formation of internal motivation for activity and personal growth.

The play space can be seen as a generalized model of various life situations and at the same time as a kind of "training ground" for the child's socialization process. It is through play that a child learns the rules of interaction, learns to communicate effectively, cooperate and resolve conflicts constructively. Sociality is an important factor in the emotional well-being and harmonious development of a child's personality, as the ability to establish relationships with others is the basis of social adaptation. Social and communication skills are formed both in the process of interaction organized by adults in the play space and during the child's independent games in the same environment [12, p. 359]. Insufficiently thought-out or poor-quality organization of the play space negatively affects the formation of social qualities of the preschooler's personality. Instead, a well-structured play space becomes an incentive for the child's independence, initiative and active personal development, taking into account his or her individual mental and social characteristics.

The results of targeted studies indicate a certain change in the perception of adults of the meaning and functions of play space. More and more often, preschoolers' play is seen not as a leading activity, but as entertainment or a form of leisure that should be replaced by focused learning. For many parents, learning is considered more important and useful than any form of play. As a result, play is gradually being pushed out of a child's daily life. However, the lack of play in a specially created play space leads to a set of problems in the development of a preschooler's personal potential. The absence or primitive organization of such an environment inhibits the formation of basic personal structures and distorts the development of emotional and volitional and social spheres [2]. A well-designed play space, on the contrary, provides conditions for independence, initiative, and free choice of activities. It allows a child to interact with significant adults of their own free will, who should act not only as organizers, but also as partners, mentors, and a source of knowledge and support. The role of an adult is to create a friendly atmosphere in which a preschool child feels free, capable of self-regulation, choice and emotional stability [6, p. 12-13].

In a broad sense, the play space is a socio-cultural environment that combines social and natural resources of child development. Its purpose is to provide a variety of activities that contribute to the full mental and personal growth of the preschooler [1, p. 92]. It is within this space that the leading activities that determine the formation of the child's personality are unfolding. A well-organized play environment supports the development of self-awareness, self-esteem, motivational sphere, emotional manifestations and feelings of a preschooler [7]. By expanding and complicating the forms of activity in the play space, the child is able to become more aware of themselves, evaluate their own actions and the behavior of others. A well-designed environment promotes a sense of dignity, self-respect, development of self-control skills, emotional balance, and responsible attitude to social relationships. During this period, a hierarchy of motives and awareness of one's own "I" in the system of interpersonal relations are formed [5, p. 86].

Within the play space, the child's life orientations are transferred to the sphere of children's subculture, which is consistent with the norms and values of the adult world and universal culture. This process is based on the harmonious harmonization of goals and objectives of the participants in the interaction - the child, the educator, other children and adults. It involves taking into account the specifics of playful interaction: an imaginary situation, a play role, rules and experience of communication. Matching occurs as a process of meeting, clashing, and combining the motives, interests, and goals of an adult and a child. Thanks to this, the preschooler acquires the ability to transfer the acquired knowledge, skills and abilities to new situations, i.e. learns to act flexibly, creatively and responsibly in changing conditions of life.

The presence of a preschool child in a well-organized play space activates their communication with adults and peers, stimulates the development of social activity and cognitive initiative. The peculiarities of building a play space directly affect the nature and quality of communication between a child and adults, during which the first manifestations of independence are formed, the boundaries of knowledge of the world around him/her are expanded, and the understanding of social relations and norms is deepened. The play space contributes to the emergence of new formations in the motivational sphere of preschoolers, in particular, motives related to cognitive interest in the life of adults and the desire to imitate their behavior, roles and actions [9]. One of the important motives at this age is the need to establish and maintain positive relationships with adults. The play space is designed to satisfy the child's need to be treated by an adult as an equal partner. In such conditions, communication acquires elements of cognitive activity - the preschooler begins to take the initiative, ask questions, comment on the actions of the adult, and express his or her own judgments.

The organization of the play space also affects the development of the personal form of communication, which is manifested in the child's desire to discuss with adults the behavior, actions and character traits of other people. In the course of the game, the relationship between a preschooler and an adult acquires a cognitive and imitative form: the child copies the activities of a significant adult, while trying to understand its meaning and logic. Such communication promotes reflection, the ability to analyze one's own actions and emotions. The desire to assert oneself gives rise to the motive of competition in children - the desire to be better, more successful, and achieve results. Along with this, moral motives play an important role, manifested in the willingness to obey elders, the desire to do good deeds, help others, and benefit others.

In the process of learning the experience of game communication and interaction, the foundations of game culture are formed. It is here that the imaginary situation, role, and rules of the game are combined, determining the logic of interaction, emotional background, and nature of joint activities of children and adults [11]. Taking on a role, the child first reproduces individual actions, then generalizes them into a system united by the image of a person. The game role acts as a means of learning cultural norms and ways of behavior, forms new meanings of activity through the development of needs, motives, and value orientations. Game rules set the boundaries of interaction between children's and adult subcultures, and help to harmonize the expectations and behavior of game participants. Thus, the play space is an important factor in expanding preschoolers' ideas about social life, forming practical skills in using objects and tools, developing the ability to independently determine the game plot, give it meaning, distribute roles, follow the rules of behavior and effectively organize interaction.

Special attention should be paid to the organization of play space in the context of building relationships between preschoolers and their peers. This type of communication is significantly different from communication with adults, as it involves a different dynamic - based on equality, mutual respect and cooperation. The need to interact with peers is manifested through the child's desire to know themselves, to compare their own capabilities, achievements and qualities with others. In the older preschool age, peers often become more significant partners for a child than adults. A well-organized play space stimulates the development of social unity, forms a readiness for mutual assistance, and teaches children to overcome conflicts peacefully. In such conditions, a child masters models of communication based on cooperation rather than submission. They learn to show sensitivity, kindness, and concern for others, which creates the foundation for a humanistic attitude towards people.

Communication of preschoolers within the play space contributes to the development of social skills: the ability to maintain a dialogue, exchange information, show leadership, and respond adequately to the emotional manifestations of others. Other important results are the formation of self-esteem, the development of empathy, and the ability to empathize and care. Sustained interest in interacting with other children is supported by the possibility of complicating play activities, enriching plots and roles. A play space that provides a transition from simple forms of communication to cooperative and competitive ones,

in which children learn to achieve a common goal, perceiving each other as partners and rivals at the same time, is effective [11]. Thus, a well-organized play space is an important means of developing the motivational sphere of preschoolers, since it is through play that motives for activity are formed that meet the child's natural needs for communication, self-expression, and cognition.

A well-organized play space should correspond to the leading activity of a preschool child - role-playing, which is one of the most important forms of creative activity and is a prerequisite for the development of creative potential. At this age, play is not only a means of leisure, but also a leading activity that causes profound changes in the cognitive processes, emotional sphere and personal qualities of the child, and contributes to the harmonious formation of his or her personal potential. One of the indicators of a well-organized play space is the ability of children to independently create game plots, choose roles, distribute functions among participants, and coordinate their own actions with those of partners. The independent organization of role-playing games ensures the development of initiative, communication skills, and also forms the ability to act in a team, following the accepted rules.

A special place among the types of game activities is occupied by the director's game, which involves the use of substitute objects and symbolic actions. In the process of such games, the child masters the ability to transfer the meaning of one object to another, which stimulates the development of imagination, associative thinking and symbolic perception of reality. Subsequently, there is a transition to role-playing, where the preschooler consciously imagines himself in a certain image, reproducing the behavior of the chosen character and the relationship between people. A prerequisite for the effectiveness of such activities is the creation of emotionally rich situations in which the child experiences vivid impressions and is able to express them in his or her own play actions and stories.

The play space should encourage children to follow clear rules of the game, to form awareness of the motives of cooperation and competition. Consistent complication of the types of games is an important condition for the mental development of a preschooler: new game forms do not replace the previous ones, but become a logical continuation of their evolution. This dynamic ensures the gradual development of thinking, speech, imagination and emotional maturity of the child. In general, the game as a leading activity of preschool age performs a number of functions that directly affect mental development: adaptive (helps the child prepare for real life situations); communicative (provides the accumulation of communication experience); cognitive (enriches intellectual potential); moral (contributes to the formation of ideas about good and evil); emotional (allows you to feel pleasure from the activity); aesthetic (forms a sense of harmony, beauty and proportion). In addition, playful activities promote physical development, form the ability to behave voluntarily, self-regulate, and develop memory, attention, imagination, perception, and will.

Within a well-organized play space, children develop intellectual actions and operations aimed at solving cognitive and practical tasks. Elements of an internal plan of action appear, first in the sphere of cognition, and later in the emotional and motivational sphere. The game allows the preschooler to develop perceptual actions, learn to control attention, structure the material during memorization and reproduction, and combine different types of thinking: visual-action, visual-figurative, and verbal-logical. An important aspect is the coordinated functioning of imagination, thinking, and speech in the game. This approach contributes to the formation of the ability to create and retain images in the mind, to manipulate them arbitrarily, using language self-instructions. The child's activity in the play space at the same time has a positive effect on the pace of mastering speech as the main means of communication, which, in turn, becomes the basis for further personal growth.

In the process of play activities, the child learns moral norms, rules of cultural behavior, forms the ability to control their own actions and turn them into consciously regulated actions [3]. It is through play that primary moral self-regulation develops - the child begins to distinguish between right and wrong, forms elementary ethical guidelines. In parallel with moral formation, there is also the development of aesthetic feelings, the ability to perceive beauty in objects, phenomena and human relationships. Play activities in a well-designed space help a child to comprehend the laws of the world around him or her, i.e., it becomes the basis for the formation of the primary, still schematic, but holistic child's worldview. It is here that the foundations of self-awareness and self-esteem are laid, and the motivational sphere, emotional stability, and ability to self-control are developed.

Participation in the game contributes to the gradual development of independence, independence from adults, and the expansion of social ties. This creates conditions for deeper self-awareness, the formation of self-esteem, and the ability to evaluate one's own actions and the actions of others. A hierarchy of motives develops, and a desire for moral self-improvement and social responsibility emerges [8]. Thus, when creating a play space, it is necessary to take into account not only aesthetic and object-spatial aspects,

but also psychological conditions that enable the child to realize his or her "I" in the system of human relations. It is this organization of the play space that will contribute to the formation of a harmonious, proactive, creative and morally mature preschooler's personality.

In order to test the theoretical generalizations made, a focus group survey was conducted. The purpose of the focus groups was to help educators and psychologists specify what they think about the features and possibilities of high-quality organization of play space in preschool education. The focus group survey revealed several important trends:

- 1) the play space is built with an emphasis on creating opportunities for preschoolers to engage in various role-playing games that are creative and consist of a sufficient number of interconnected elements; active participation of children in such games contributes to the development of their consciousness, system of needs, moral beliefs and other personal qualities that significantly affect the formation of purposefulness and stability of behavior; conditions are created for children to take the initiative in terms of the theme of games and the actual game actions;
- 2) in some children's groups, the organization of the play space is focused on creating conditions for various types of productive activities, for board games, for performing object actions; children in such groups have a significantly impoverished content of play activities, lack of interest in interaction with peers, and prefer manipulative and monotonous play activities;
- 3) in many groups, the play space is filled with a variety of toys, materials and equipment based on thematic zones, which limits children's choice of play activities, their initiative, and reinforces the reproductive nature of play; playrooms lack a variety of materials, games and equipment that would ensure children's free choice of favorite activities;
- 4) the organization of the play space is carried out without taking into account the dynamics and mobility of the environment, there is no zoning into active, working and quiet zones; children are deprived of the opportunity to move freely in it, which does not form the ability of preschoolers to actively cooperate with the environment, does not contribute to the development of their activity and freedom;
- 5) the principles of variability, diversity and accessibility are only partially observed in the organization of the play space, which negatively affects the development of children's ability to navigate in human life and beyond, to behave moderately and prudently in new conditions;
- 6) in the studied groups, the play space is organized in such a way that it does not sufficiently contribute to the formation of the motivational sphere of play activities and the ability to cooperate in joint play activities, that is, the development of the need for play, the formation of playful motives for interaction with peers, friendliness and openness to relationships with peers and educators;
- 7) educators do not take into account the fact that the organization of play space for children of this age category should not be spontaneous, but with the understanding that preschoolers have a need and begin to form a desire to show such personal traits as independence and activity;
- 8) not all educators guide, support and assist children in play activities, take into account their individual characteristics and needs; some educators lack the ability to unobtrusively and tactfully interest children in play activities, which can harm the free development and activity of preschoolers; only sometimes educators offer children games based on partnership and voluntary participation of everyone;
- 9) in general, educators understand that children not only live in a different world, but also have a different perception of it, but do not realize that in the process of organizing play space in preschool education institutions, care should be taken to create conditions for preschool children to realize themselves as individuals.

Thus, the focus group survey revealed a contradiction between the necessary (activity in the organization of play space and a clear understanding of its role and importance in the mental development of children) and the actual (lack of an adequate level of activity in the organization of play space, lack of understanding of the importance of its impact on the personal development of preschool children) ideas of educators about its quality. We believe that the design of preschool children's play space in the context of a child-centered approach should be aimed at developing the child's individual capabilities in various aspects of human existence, forming the child's inner freedom and independence in relations with people around him or her and the environment. The modern approach to the organization of preschool children's play space should be based on the developmental and protective paradigm in terms of physical, mental, social and spiritual health of the child [1, p. 91].

**Conclusions.** Thus, in the process of determining the features and strategies for the development of the personal potential of preschool children, an important role should be given to the analysis of the essence and specifics of the organization of the play space. The full and harmonious development of a child is possible only if the multidirectionality of the play environment is taken into account when creating and

improving it. The play space is considered as an integral system of conditions and influences that ensure the active development of the preschooler's personal potential, the formation of his/her ability to independent and creative activity, the development of communication skills, the ability to cooperate, take initiative and adapt to changes. It is a space for the child's life and personal growth, within which he or she gains experience of leadership and subordination, develops cognitive activity and learns the moral norms of social life.

The organization of a modern play space should be based on the latest approaches that prioritize a personality-oriented concept of development that helps to unlock the potential of each child. Creating such an environment requires taking into account the multifunctionality of the space and play materials that can stimulate the child to plan and implement their own play ideas independently. After all, toys or objects with fixed uses often limit creativity, reduce variability, and lead to monotony in preschoolers' actions. Instead, the ability to freely transform the play space significantly increases the level of play activity, independence and creativity of the child.

Improving the organization of the play space should be based on the principles of ecologization, individualization and child-centeredness, which involve taking into account the psychological, age and social characteristics of each child's development. The implementation of these approaches ensures the creation of an optimal developmental environment that will help to reveal the individuality of preschoolers, increase the effectiveness of the educational process and harmoniously combine the educational, educational and developmental components of play activities.

A perspective for further research. In developing the problem of organizing the play space as a factor in the development of preschool children's personal potential, we consider it promising to focus on identifying the direct impact of the quality of the play space on the development of individual qualities, cognitive abilities and intelligence, creativity and creativity of preschool children, as well as their readiness for school and the course of adaptation processes.

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