

Sand therapy as an innovative technology for the development of cognitive abilities in preschool children

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Abstract. The article discusses the possibilities of using sand therapy means in the development of cognitive abilities in older preschool children, discloses the principles of implementing this technology in the process of interaction between a teacher-psychologist and children. According to the authors, the advantage of innovative sand technology is that the joint cognitive activity of a preschooler with an adult and peers contributes to the expansion of cognitive motivation, fills the child's own cognitive activity with a new personal meaning.

Keywords: sand therapy, non-traditional approaches, innovative technologies, individual approach, interaction, cognitive activity, preschool education.

Today, the main priority in education, in accordance with the Federal Law "On Education", is the personality-oriented interaction of the teacher with the child: acceptance, support of his personality, interests and needs, development of creative abilities, concern for his emotional well-being. The modern world is becoming more and more diverse and complex every day, it requires from the younger generation not routine, habitual actions, but the activity and mobility of thinking processes, quick orientation, a creative approach in solving both life and professional tasks. Under these conditions, the problem of the development of cognitive abilities in older preschool children by means of sand therapy is becoming more and more urgent, specifying various forms and means of organizing children's activities, the development of all higher mental functions, cognitive processes and creative abilities in a child. The relevance of the study is also due to the fact that nowadays non-traditional approaches are increasingly

used in the development of mental processes, including cognitive abilities in children from an early age.

In turn, the Federal State Educational Standard of preschool education requires the introduction of innovative technologies into practice that can provide an individual approach to each child with the aim of all-round development. In the modern educational system of preschool education, we consider sand therapy as a new innovative technology, one of the types of scientifically grounded creative therapy – art therapy.

It should be noted that in foreign and domestic psychology and pedagogy the issues of studying the theoretical basis, methodology and practice of using sand therapy concerned many researchers (K.G. Jung, M. Lowenfeld, D. Kалff, L. Steinhard, S.L. Rubinstein, M.M. Bakhtin). An invaluable contribution to the development of the problem under study was made by Zinkevich-Evstigneeva T.D., Grabenko T.M., Bolshebratskaya E.E., Osipuk E.I., Sakovich N.A., Loginova O.I., Berezhnaya N.F., Vorobyova Yu.V., Novikova N.A., Permyakova M.E., Podzorova A.O., Sapozhnikova O.B., Leontiev A.A., etc.

However, despite the sufficient knowledge of individual issues of this problem in theoretical terms, practice-oriented foundations of this technology are not fully developed, as a result of which teachers do not have sufficient experience for its successful implementation. Insufficient development of some questions in theoretical aspects and its practical orientation made it possible to formulate the research problem: what are the possibilities of sand therapy in the development of cognitive abilities in children? The goal of the study follows from the problem, which is to substantiate the possibility of using sand therapy means in the development of cognitive abilities in older preschool children.

Active development of the cognitive sphere in senior preschool age creates the basis for successful learning at the next stage of development [1]. Recently, teachers have noted a significant decline in the level of independent cognitive activity in preschoolers. Children are not interested in accepting and memorizing new information, the need for independent learning of the environment, an independent search for answers to questions of interest, a cognitive attitude to the world is not formed. In some children, cognitive activity is poorly manifested, which is expressed in insufficient development of mental processes: blurred perception, instability of memory, distraction of attention, lack of formation of the internal plan of speech, etc. Preschoolers are often not capable of full regulation of mental actions.

To solve the problems of the development of the cognitive activity of children through their active participation in the educational process in the conditions of a preschool educational

institution, we consider it necessary to use in educational and educational practice new, effective pedagogical technologies aimed at personal development, as well as mastering the necessary practical knowledge, skills, logical and verbal thinking designed to teach children to independently search for solutions in various situations [3].

One of these innovative technologies that contribute to the development and disclosure of the creative potential of the child's personality is sand therapy. The advantage of this type of art therapy is that the joint cognitive activity of a preschooler with an adult and with peers has a beneficial effect on the development of cognitive motivation, fills the cognitive activity of children with a new personal meaning.

The implementation of sand therapy technology in the process of interaction between a teacher and children requires the use of certain principles. We will list some:

- the principle of a comfortable environment – presupposes the creation of such conditions in which children should feel the safety, convenience, comfort of a partnership with a teacher;

- the principle of unconditional acceptance of the child encourages a teacher to accept the child as he is, regardless of the physical and aesthetic state, life values, experience, and most importantly, to accept all the child's actions in the sandbox;

- the principle of accessibility of information means that all recommendations of a teacher-psychologist must be accessible and understandable to a child, a psychologist must speak "the same language" with children;

- the principle of concretization and objectification assumes that the teacher-psychologist helps a child to find an adequate solution, concretize the problem, shows a holistic picture of what is happening, since children often lose a holistic vision of the situation, emotionally reacting to the details of what is happening;

- the principle of focusing on the potential resource of a preschooler orients the psychologist to the fact that he should always, in parallel with the child's problem, explore his various potential resources, as the information obtained in this way about the potential of a child helps the specialist in the development of counseling programs and specific recommendations regarding the problems of personality formation.

The teacher-psychologist chooses the forms and options for sand therapy himself, taking into account the theme of the sand painting, based on the number and age characteristics of children, the temperament and condition of a particular child, the goals and objectives of the educational game. Actually, the sand therapy procedure itself is filled with a

rich fantasy play, arouses interest and a storm of positive emotions in children [3]. The child is liberated, he can express himself, there are no boundaries of standard forms of education. The speed of assimilation of knowledge and skills by children determines the positiveness of socialization and individualization of children and is of great importance for preparing children for school education.

In the process of experimental work, we have developed a set of integrated lessons for the development of cognitive abilities of older preschool children by means of sand therapy, including both educational games – fairy tale games, games for the development of memory, speech, phonemic hearing, correction of sound pronunciation, development of fine motor skills, and cognitive (the world around, geography, ecology). In order to activate cognitive interest, one should practice the learning process mainly in the form of conversation, discussion, projective and cognitive games, drawing, with elements of fairy tale therapy.

The implementation of the method of sand therapy in the process of training requires the creation of favorable conditions for the harmonization of the mental state and personal growth of children. By participating in playful forms of classes, children receive a charge of positive emotions, showing independence: they themselves come up with stories, obstacles and ways to solve them. Children gain experience of independent conflict resolution, learn to listen and hear each other while neuropsychic tension and stress states of children decrease. Children noticeably increase cognitive and creative interest, the ability to think logically, self-esteem increases markedly, children become much bolder and more confident. The sandbox encourages children to take new opportunities for development.

A comparative analysis of the levels of indicators of the development of cognitive needs can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 - Comparative analysis of indicators of the cognitive need of a preschooler (methodology "Cognitive need of a preschooler" (author V.S. Yurkevich, modification and adaptation in relation to preschool age by E.A. Baranova)

The level of development of cognitive needs	The ascertaining stage		Control stage	
	Absolute number	%	Absolute number	%
Ascertaining stage				
Control stage				

high	15	55,5	22	81,5
moderate	8	29,6	5	18,5
low	4	14,8	0	0

A comparative analysis of the indicators of the cognitive needs of preschoolers using this methodology allowed us to draw the following conclusions: the level of cognitive needs of children with high needs increased from 55.5% at the ascertaining stage to 81.5% at the formative stage of the experiment, thus improving by 26%. And this, in turn, influenced the level of the children with moderate needs (from 29.6% to 18.5%), which indicates a trend towards an increase in the level of cognitive needs in children. There were no children with low cognitive needs in terms of development at the control stage.

In terms of awareness, the number of children with a high level of needs also increased: from 6 (22.2%) at the ascertaining stage to 20 (74%) respondents at the control stage, which enhanced the number of "good" children from 15 (55.5%) to 6 (22.2%); at the middle level there were 3 children (11.1%). A low level at the control stage was not found in any child while at the ascertaining stage there were 3 of such children.

As for the development of memory, it should be noted that it improved in all respondents: we found a high level of memory development in all 26 children (96.2%).

Indicators of attention also improved, it became more concentrated and stable: 23 children (85.1%) coped with the task successfully compared to 16 children (59.2%) at the beginning of the experiment; at the middle level, 4 children coped successfully (14.8%) compared to 7 children (25.9%) at the beginning; 4 children from the category of "unsuccessful" also improved their results and no one from this group was left at the control stage.

So, a comparative analysis of the assessments of the completed tasks at the ascertaining and control stages of the experiment showed a tendency towards a decrease in low assessments and an increase in high ones.

Thus, the results of the experimental work indicate that the developed and implemented system of exercises for the development of cognitive abilities by means of sand therapy in older preschool children is effective and contributes to an increase in the level of development of cognitive abilities.

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