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DEVELOPMENT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD THROUGH FAIRY TALES

Early childhood is a special and sensitive period in a child's life when the foundations of emotional and social development are laid. During this time, children experience vivid but unstable emotions, have limited verbal skills, and primarily express their feelings through gestures, facial expressions, and simple words. The development of emotional intelligence (EI) in early childhood - the ability to recognize, express, and regulate emotions - is a crucial step toward harmonious personality formation.

Scientific research shows that fairy tales play a key role in shaping children's emotional spheres as a means of education and emotional development. They help children understand basic moral concepts, behavioral models, and gain emotional experience. Studies by L.S. Vygotsky, V. Sukhomlynsky, and modern educators confirm that fairy tales contribute to the development of empathy, emotional sensitivity, and imagination in young children.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the effectiveness of using fairy tales to develop emotional intelligence in early childhood.

The emotional development of children aged 1–3 is characterized by impulsiveness, vivid emotional expressions, and spontaneity. Children quickly shift from joy to tears, from fear to laughter. At this stage, they are not yet able to understand and regulate their emotions independently. Fairy tales, with their simple language, vivid imagery, and moral content, serve as an accessible and effective tool for developing emotional intelligence in early childhood.

Features of Emotional Development in Early Childhood

- **Emotional impulsivity** – rapid changes in emotions without apparent reason.
- **Emotional contagion** – children easily adopt emotions from adults and peers.
- **Creative imagination** – children attribute human qualities to animals and objects.
- **Dependence on adults** – a child's emotions are closely linked to adult reactions.

Functions of Fairy Tales in Developing Emotional Intelligence

1. **Cognitive-moral function** – introduces children to concepts of good and evil, helping them recognize right and wrong actions.
2. **Therapeutic function** – helps children cope with fears, reduce anxiety, and find solutions in difficult situations.
3. **Socializing function** – teaches simple social rules and behavioral models through the actions of characters.

Methods of Using Fairy Tales for Early Childhood Development

To effectively develop emotional intelligence in children aged 1–3, the following methods of working with fairy tales are recommended:

1. **Repeated reading of short fairy tales** – Young children need to hear the same fairy tales multiple times to better absorb emotions and storylines. Examples: *The Gingerbread Man (Kolobok)*, *The Mitten (Rukavychka)*, *The Three Bears*.

2. **Identifying the emotions of characters** – Simple questions help children connect characters' actions with their emotions: “Is the little hare happy or scared?” “Why is the bear cub sad?”

3. **Enacting fairy tales with toys** – Using soft toys or puppets to act out the story helps children understand character emotions and express their own feelings. For example, while telling *The Mitten*, children can imitate animals hiding inside it.

4. **Changing the storyline** – Encouraging children to imagine alternative actions of a character (e.g., *What if the Gingerbread Man never left home?*) fosters creativity and problem-solving skills.

Thus, fairy tales are an effective tool for developing emotional intelligence in early childhood. Through fairy tales, children learn to recognize and name basic emotions, empathize with others, understand feelings, and express emotions through play, drawing, and role-playing.

The systematic use of fairy tales helps children manage their emotions, reduces anxiety, and facilitates social adaptation. The fairy tale world provides a safe environment for young children to explore their emotions, laying the foundation for their harmonious development.

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