

*D. Puravets,
Student,
O. Humankova,
Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences,
Associate Professor,
Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University*

INTRODUCING CHILDREN OF EARLY PRE-SCHOOL AGE TO FAMILY AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

The topicality of the problem. The family is the first and most important social institution in a child's life. It is in the family that primary socialisation takes place, the foundations of moral and ethical concepts are laid, and an emotional and value-based attitude towards the surrounding environment is formed. From early childhood, a child learns social roles, observes interactions between adults, and learns about the system of family relationships. Therefore, familiarising children of early pre-school age with family and family relationships is of particular pedagogical importance [1: 14].

Analysis of recent studies and publications. The issue of the social development of preschoolers is the focus of attention of such Ukrainian and foreign researchers as G. Bielenka, A. Bogush, N. Gavrysh, O. Kononko, V. Kuz, T. Ponimanska and others. At the same time, the issue of methods for introducing 3–4-year-old children to family relationships remains under-researched and requires further investigation.

Aim of the research. To characterise the theoretical foundations and methodological approaches to introducing children of early preschool age to family and family relationships in accordance with contemporary requirements of preschool education.

Presentation of the main material. In educational science, the concept of 'family relationships' is interpreted as a system of interrelationships between family members, including emotional, role-based and communicative aspects. Family relationships are genetically and legally determined relationships between people that form the family structure of society. For a child of early pre-school age, these concepts are inseparable: the family is perceived as a single emotional space where each member performs a specific function [2 : 96].

According to the Core Component of Pre-school Education in Ukraine (2021) [3: 12], familiarisation with the social environment is an essential part of the educational process. In particular, it is stipulated that children of early pre-school age should know the names of their family members, be aware of family roles (mum, dad, grandma, grandad, brother, sister), and understand the basic norms of family interaction — care, mutual support and respect. This knowledge forms the basis for the development of civic identity and social competence.

It is important to note that 'family' and 'kin' are, although closely related, not identical concepts. A family is primarily a social structure of cohabitation, whereas a kin group is a broader community of relatives united by common roots and ancestral memory [4: 127]. For a child aged 3–4, the immediate environment is of paramount

importance; however, gradually, through celebrations, photo albums and adults' stories, they begin to grasp the concept of the extended family.

Early preschool age (3–4 years) is a sensitive period for the acquisition of social role models. During this period, there is rapid development of the child's speech, imaginative thinking and emotional sphere, which directly influences the nature of their perception of family relationships. The child moves from a purely egocentric perception of the world to an embryonic understanding of other people, their roles and needs [5:115].

Educational literature emphasizes that it is during early childhood that a child's social competence is formed [4:83; 5:118]. A child aged 3–4 is capable of: naming the main family members and their names; distinguishing the emotional states of their loved ones (Mum is sad, Dad is happy); reproducing family roles in role-play games; imitating the behavior of adults in everyday situations.

At the same time, there are certain limitations characteristic of this stage of development. The child perceives family relationships primarily through the prism of their own emotional impressions, rather than through logical analysis. They do not yet understand complex family relationships (cousin, niece, etc.), and are unable to comprehend chronology (grandfather is dad's dad). Therefore, educational work should be based on accessible concrete images, situations from everyday family life, and playful forms of learning [1: 64].

O. Kononko [4: 83] notes that the social development of children in early and pre-school age occurs through imitation and direct emotional experience. This means that familiarization with family relationships should not be achieved through abstract explanations, but by involving the child in real and simulated situations of family interaction that evoke a positive emotional response.

Introducing early pre-school children to family and family relationships in an effective way requires a comprehensive combination of teaching methods and techniques that are appropriate to the psychological characteristics of children at this age [2:178].

Play-based methods occupy a leading role in working with children 3–4 years old. The role-play game 'Family' is a basic form in which the child imitates and comprehends family roles. During the game, the teacher helps children to model various family situations: cooking, looking after young children, and welcoming guests. Educational games ('Who's Who in the Family?', 'Put Together a Family Portrait', 'Whose Voice Is It?') help to consolidate knowledge of family relationships and expand vocabulary [5:103].

Visual methods play a key role, taking into account the imaginative and active nature of children's thinking at this age. The use of family photo albums, illustrations, object pictures and video recordings allows the child to establish a connection between a specific image and a family concept. Viewing illustrations for literary works about the family (V. Sukhomlynsky's stories [6:201], Ukrainian folk tales) stimulates emotional empathy and develops a positive attitude towards family relationships.

Practical methods are implemented through the children's direct participation in common productive activities. Drawing 'My Family', modelling figures of family members, and making greeting cards for family celebrations — all of this helps to foster

a strong, emotionally positive image of the family. Conducting thematic classes involving parents ('My mum can...', 'What does our dad like?') strengthens the link between the child's home and pre-school environments [5: 145].

Among verbal methods, conversation holds a special place. A teacher's conversation with children about their relatives, reading literary works (V. Sukhomlynsky's 'The Dearest Person' [6: 186], Ukrainian folk tales about the family), and learning poems and songs about mum, dad, grandma and grandad enrich the child's emotional and cognitive experience. Particularly effective are the children's own stories about their families — this promotes the development of coherent speech and self-identification [7: 234].

Conclusions. Introducing children of early pre-school age to family and family relationships is an integral part of their social development. As the primary social institution, the family shapes a child's basic understanding of the world around them and determines their system of values and social role models. Educational work in this area should be carried out taking into account the psychological characteristics of 3–4-year-old children. The integrated use of playful, visual, practical and verbal methods, combined with the active participation of parents, is the key to the successful formation in preschoolers a positive, value-rich image of the family and the understanding of family relationships.

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