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THE FORMATION OF SOCIAL COMPETENCE IN CHILDREN OF LOWER-KINDERGARTEN AGE THROUGH ROLE-PLAY ACTIVITIES

The rapid development of modern society and its focus on communicative interaction determine the need to form a socially aware and adaptable generation. In preschool age, the foundations of social behavior are laid, which are critically important for successful integration into the educational environment (school) and later adult life. Therefore, the formation of social competence (SC) is one of the key tasks of modern preschool education institutions.

Social competence is a key component of personality development, which includes the necessary body of knowledge about social roles, emotional and volitional readiness, and the ability to apply this knowledge in various situations of communication and interaction. Its formation occurs during the leading activity of preschool children—role-play (RP).

The problem of socialization, the role of play, and the formation of competencies in preschool children has been studied by O. Kononko, T. Ponimanska, and others. However, the issue of systematizing the use of role-play as a “social laboratory” for forming a holistic social competence—comprising communicative-practical, emotional-regulatory, and cognitive-normative components - remains insufficiently explored in modern research.

The purpose of this article is to draw attention to the prospective possibilities of using role-play for the formation of social competence, its key components, and to outline the methodological stages of this process in preschool education institutions.

Social competence is defined as the ability to solve social tasks in interaction with peers and adults in accordance with social norms and cultural traditions in direct communication [4, p. 32].

An important component of social competence is a child’s play experience. Social competence involves the ability to appropriately regulate one’s behavior and understand the motives and feelings of others. It is based on a complex and dynamic interaction of social knowledge, skills, abilities, and emotional awareness.

Social knowledge is the reflection in children’s consciousness of their understanding of the social system, expressed through concepts of social roles (doctor, teacher, parent) and the rules governing them (rules of behavior in transport, hospitals, etc.).

Social knowledge includes:

- understanding the system of social roles;
- semantics of socially normative vocabulary (polite expressions, requests, refusals);
- basic rules of cooperation and conflict resolution;

- understanding cause-and-effect relationships in social actions;
- recognizing similarities and differences in the behavior of adults and children in various situations.

The main components of social competence formed through role-play are social skills:

- Receptive skill (emotional-regulatory): automatic perception and awareness of a partner's emotional state, demonstration of empathy;
- Reproductive skill (communicative-practical): automatic use of socially acceptable behaviors (dialogue, compromise, assistance) in various play and real-life situations [2, p. 110].

In organizing role-play activities, three main stages contributing to the formation of social competence can be distinguished:

1. Stage of identification and initial role acquisition.

At this stage, game methods, engaging situations, and motivation for mastering a new social role are used. Children become familiar with roles through observation, conversations, reading, and direct role adoption. Activities include receptive exercises such as "Who does what?", "Show the emotion," and the game "Magic Chair" (a child sits and says who they are, e.g., "I am a doctor, and I will..."). An original activity, "Role Relay," can also be used, where the teacher names a profession and children take turns naming one responsibility (e.g., "Shop assistant – invites a customer," "Shop assistant – weighs goods").

2. Stage of action automation and coordination of play intentions.

Children engage in active practice of behavioral patterns and understanding roles in interaction. Activities require cooperation and coordination, such as "Continue the dialogue," "Let's build a bridge together," and the game "Telephone" (passing a message). An additional activity is "Conflict Situation," where children are given a scenario (e.g., "Two doctors want to perform an operation") and must find at least two solutions to continue the game.

3. Stage of communicative practice and social reflection.

At this stage, children learn to appropriately apply social skills in complex and extended plot scenarios. They engage in communication, reasoning, and imagination within the game context. Activities include "Create a story for our city," "Role drama," and "Interview a character." An additional task, "Social Court" (simplified), involves discussing whether a character acted correctly (e.g., whether a "police officer" treated a "driver" fairly), which activates the cognitive-normative component of social competence.

In conclusion, the use of various types of role-play is highly effective in forming social competence in middle preschool children. Play creates a unique environment for the practical development of emotional-regulatory, communicative-practical, and cognitive-normative skills, which are essential for the comprehensive and harmonious development of a preschool child's personality.

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