Animation as a means of forming independence in older preschool children

ANIMATION AS A MEANS OF FORMING INDEPENDENCE IN OLDER PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

ANIMAÇÃO COMO MEIO DE FORMAÇÃO DE INDEPENDÊNCIA EM CRIANÇAS MAIS VELHAS EM FASE PRÉ-ESCOLAR

LA ANIMACIÓN COMO MEDIO PARA LA FORMACIÓN DE LA INDEPENDENCIA EN NIÑOS MAYORES EN PREESCOLAR

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ABSTRACT: The article reports the results of a study on the formation of independence in older preschool children by means of animation. The content of the concepts of “preschoolers’ independence” and its structural components is revealed. The potential of animated films in the formation of independence in 5-7-year-old children is demonstrated. The authors describe an experimental study focusing on the implementation of a specially developed program “Cartoons about the most important” aimed at the formation of all structural components of independence in older preschoolers.


RESUMO: O artigo relata os resultados de um estudo sobre a formação da independência em pré-escolares maiores por meio de animação. Revela-se o conteúdo dos conceitos de “independência do pré-escolar” e seus componentes estruturais. Demonstra-se o potencial dos filmes de animação na formação da independência em crianças de 5 a 7 anos. Os autores descrevem um estudo experimental com foco na implementação de um programa especialmente desenvolvido “Desenhos sobre o mais importante” visando a formação de todos os componentes estruturais da independência em pré-escolares mais velhos.


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RESUMEN: El artículo relata los resultados de un estudio sobre la formación de la independencia en niños preescolares mayores por medio de la animación. Se revela el contenido de los conceptos de “independencia del preescolar” y sus componentes estructurales. Se demuestra el potencial de las películas animadas en la formación de la independencia en niños de 5 a 7 años. Los autores describen un estudio experimental centrado en la implementación de un programa especialmente desarrollado "Dibujos animados sobre lo más importante" destinado a la formación de todos los componentes estructurales de la independencia en niños en edad preescolar mayores.


Introduction

At the present stage, society is clearly articulating the question of bringing changes to the system of preschool education. The message of the President of Russia Putin (2020) clearly states that by 2021, 255 thousand places will be created in preschool educational organizations, which points to the demand for this service and the need to create a competent, clear, and professional teaching process in the field of preschool education. One of the main normative legal documents in the preschool education system is the Federal State Educational Standard for Preschool Education (FSES PE), which imposes its own requirements for the personalities of preschool children and the results of the development of the educational program. Among the priority tasks of FSES PE is the development of the general culture and independence of preschoolers, which is confirmed by the objective of the concept of the development of Russian education until 2024 and the social order of the state. There emerges the need to find the optimal ways of resolving the vital tasks of forming significant personal qualities.

Psychological and pedagogical literature does not offer a universal definition of the concept of independence and instead presents a broad and ambiguous interpretation, which generates problems in the study of the process of the formation of independence.

In this light, children’s independence becomes the focus of attention of educators, researchers, and scholars.

Analysis of research shows that several stages are distinguished in the formation of preschoolers’ independence. The first manifestations of independence appear in early preschool age when children gain some freedom of movement, actions in play, and interaction with society.

Further development of independence in preschoolers shows itself in various specific types of children’s activity, in which preschoolers master the position of the subject.
Studies of children’s everyday interaction with digital technologies are gaining popularity. There is a growing recognition of digital childhood. In this context, of special importance are the activities of creating animation, which we present in the study as a culturally mediated environment for children.

In this study, we view animation as an active introduction of preschool children to digital technology in the context of education and upbringing. Children engage in the process of creating cartoons and transform from passive consumers of animation products into active participants in their creation. Children independently invent scenarios, voice their characters, prepare decorations and the necessary props, learn the principles of the work of the equipment. In this work, children develop the readiness to set goals and objectives for themselves, independently search for the ways of achieving them, and realize them in different types of children’s activity. There forms “a certain independence of the child from the adult”. Furthermore, the process of working with animation operates the images of the intergenerational code, which helps to maintain the bond between parents and their children. One of the positive aspects of this instrument is the effect of watching cartoons, which promotes the rise of emotions. It is in cartoons that a child sees patterns of behavior, learns how to act in a particular situation, how to achieve a goal. Through comparing themselves to their favorite characters, the child has the opportunity to learn to perceive themselves positively, to cope with their fears and difficulties, and to treat others with respect. Educational multimedia content allows the child to feel happy in the adult world because working with cartoons does not allow teachers to impose their deficits on the development of the young person’s personality and an important role in this environment is reserved for the child.

The purpose of the present work is the determine the potential of animation in the formation of independence in senior preschoolers. In accordance with the set goal, the identified objectives include analyzing the concept of “independence of older preschoolers”, determining the capabilities of animated products in the formation of preschoolers’ independence, and giving a characteristic of the specific aspects of using animation in the process of forming independence in older preschool children.

Literature review

The topic of students’ independence is raised in the following works of foreign authors: Goetz et al. (1983), Steinberg and Silverberg (1986), Chinn et al. (1991), Keefe and Berndt (1996), Kagitcibasi (1996), Schulenberg, Maggs, and Hurrelmann (1997), Ryan and Deci
These studies tap into the problem of “autonomy”, which is the closest term in the English language to the Russian definition of independence. Sunarty and Dirawan Darma (2015) explore the relationship between upbringing and the model of the child’s independence. Tarazi, Mahone and Zabel (2007) indicate executive function as the main component in the development of independence.

The problems of the development of independence in students are also considered in the works of Russian researchers. Sumnitelnyi and Prokofeva (2021) examine the specific characteristics of the development of students’ independence in Montessori schools. Ivoshina and Shvareva (2011) reveal the peculiarities of the formation of learning independence in students. The research on the peculiarities of the methodology of children’s independent activity management is considered by Lebedeva (2015). The preparation of the younger generation for independent activity is researched by Neiasova (2016) and others. Golubchikova (2020) presents a retrospective analysis of the concept of “independence”, etc.

The problem of the formation of independence in preschool age is studied by Zharova (1982), Korotkova (2000), Manokhina (2019) and Mikerina (2016). Researchers Vlasova (2000), Grizik (2017), Zebzeeva (2016), Ivanov, Tepliuk and Markova (2021), Babaeva (2020) and Zvereva (2015) argue that the factor of the formation of independence in children of senior preschool age is their active activity in all specific types of children’s activity. Furthermore, the dynamics of the formation of independence are associated with the features, needs, and interests of the younger generation.

In accordance with the goal of the present study, we present the reflection of the specifics of using and creating animated products in the educational process provided in the works of foreign and Russian researchers. The significance and potential of using animation culture in teaching senior preschool students were first noted by foreign scientists in the 1980s Gibbons et al. (1986). The researchers have conducted a study using audio and visual materials, animated films included, in the educational process. The list of foreign researchers who studied the impact of animation technology on the assimilation of knowledge and skills by students includes Lowe (2003), Schontz and Rasch (2008), Alaba (2007), Barak, Ashkar and Dori (2011), Eker and Karadeniz (2014), Li, Antonenko and Wang (2019), Mou et al. (2019). Russian researchers Medvedeva (2006), Kostiushina (2010), Kunichenko (2014), Smirnova and Sokolova (2014), Abdulova (2017), and others highlight the requirements for the selection of animated products for children: the boundaries between good and evil should not be blurred, the speech of the characters needs to be grammatically correct, the visual images of the characters need to be pleasant to the eye, and so on.
Methods

The study is conducted using the theoretical methods of analysis of psychological and pedagogical literature, analysis of the fundamental concepts of the study, cause-effect analysis of the phenomena studied, prediction, and comparison and the empirical method of pedagogical experiment.

The experimental study is conducted in 2018-2021 based on the extended school hours center of the Mordovia State Pedagogical University named after M.E. Evseviev. The sample of the experiment includes 40 children of the senior group and the age of 5-7 years old.

Results and discussion

The conducted study and analysis of scientific and methodical literature allows formulating the concept of “independence of older preschoolers”, which we understand as a significant personal quality characterized by the readiness to set goals and objectives for oneself, independently search for the right courses of action, and follow them (determine the direction) in different specific types of children’s activity.

The primary elements of independence at older preschool age include:

– the ability to set the goals of one’s actions;
– the ability to plan one’s actions;
– the ability to correct the course of action;
– the ability to correlate the results obtained with the set goal.

Proceeding from the objectives of our study, we examine the independence of older preschool children in the system of its three structural components, namely:

– the cognitive component (the presence of ideas about independence, the ability to flexibly and quickly change the course of one’s actions, to carry out goal setting and reflection in different specific types of children’s activity);
– the activity component (ability and readiness to act independently in a specific life situation, when facing the choice of possible courses of action);
– the motivational-volitional component (demonstration of motives and aspiration for independent activity and the achievement of success, self-confidence).

To reveal the capabilities of animation in forming the independence of older preschool children, we develop a model of an experimental study conducted based on the extended school
hours center of the Mordovia State Pedagogical University named after M.E. Evseviev (MSPU) on a group of 40 older preschool children (5-7 years old).

The pedagogical experiment is organized based on the theoretical provisions of the study and in accordance with the criterion-diagnostic apparatus. To realize the idea of the ascertaining experiment, the control (CG) and experimental (EG) samples are formed. The levels and indicators of the formation of independence in older preschoolers are identified.

The ascertaining stage of the experiment (2018-2019) consists in the assessment of the initial level of the formation of independence in the older preschoolers. The diagnostic methods selected and deployed for this purpose include a modified version of the “Design” method and a series of observations “Plot images” (our version).

The validity of the selected methods is confirmed by statistical methods and calculations.

The results of initial diagnostics indicate that the high level of formation of independence is demonstrated by only 20% of older preschoolers, while 25% of the children at the age of 5-7 years old are at the average level, and 55% are at the low level.

The formative stage of the experimental work (2019-2020) involves the implementation of the program “Cartoons about the most important” developed by us, which is targeted at the formation of children’s independence in various types of activities specific for them. The program unveils the capabilities of animation in the formation of all structural components of independence in older preschool children. The work is carried out in three main directions:

– production of animated content based on the stories of one’s own creation;
– work on viewing and analyzing the plots of cartoons;
– enlightenment work with the families on the use of animated films, which is carried out in a specific order and is aimed at the development of children’s independence.

As part of the first line of work in this program, an animation studio “Multi_Tuti” is created to bring the secrets of animated stories to life. Beginner cartoonists, independently or under the guidance of the teacher, compose original ideas of cartoons or remake the plots of already existing fairy tales, cartoons, stories, and so on, which gives a good impetus to the development of the imagination of preschool children. Next, after the plot is developed, responsibilities for the creation of scenery, characters, the role of the cameraman, the director, the editor, and the like are distributed. In these roles, children feel responsible for the work they are entrusted with and independently or with the teacher’s assistance outline the plan of action, and get to the result. Special enthusiasm is shown by the preschoolers in the process of shooting and editing animated products. Dynamic graphics, its stylistic and genre richness, originality,
and uniqueness provide a fertile basis for the formation of children’s independence. The next direction of the program “Cartoons about the most important” is associated with the work on viewing and analyzing the stories of cartoons. The materials selected include both Soviet and modern cartoons portraying children’s independence or the consequences of not being independent and acting irresponsibly. The work on the productions uses the “freeze-frame” technique for a more detailed discussion and understanding of the importance of this quality in childhood.

Thus, according to our observations, children show particular interest in animated films raising moral problems, the ones in which the main characters are faced with a moral choice and the children give them advice on how to act.

The third direction of work in the program is targeted at work with the family for pedagogical enlightenment on the use of animated films. A survey conducted with the parents reveals that most of them use animated content as a means of entertaining the child, keeping them busy for a certain period, while virtually no work is carried out on the consumed content. The measures organized in response include children’s and parents’ projects on the creation of cartoons and group consultations for students’ families on the pedagogical potential of the screen production. In addition, educational memos, booklets, and stands were developed.

At the control stage of the experiment (2020-2021), the level of formation of independence in older preschoolers is assessed for the second time. The results indicate that the high level is reached by 35% of participants in the experiment, which is 15% higher than the initial level; 30% demonstrate the average level, which is 5% more than at the ascertaining stage; the low level is detected in 35% of the children, which is 20% less than in the initial diagnostics.

**Conclusion**

The results of the conducted experimental study are positive, thus indicating the significance of forming older preschoolers’ independence by means of animated films. Therefore, purposeful use of animation in a certain system allows for the stage-by-stage formation of all components of independence in older preschool children. The value of the materials provided in the article lies in the fact that the authors reveal the potential of using animation in the process of forming the independence of older preschool children.
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