



DEVELOPMENT OF THE PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE OF PARENTS IN THE SYSTEM OF PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE PRESCHOOL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION AND THE FAMILY

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Annotation. *The article substantiates the development of the pedagogical competence of parents as the central content-related task of the partnership between the preschool educational institution and the family. Parental pedagogical competence is presented as an integral characteristic that unites motivational and value-based, cognitive, communicative and emotional, activity-related and technological, and reflective and evaluative components; three levels of its formation and the corresponding criteria and indicators are described. A four-module content model of parental education and a system of practice-oriented forms of its implementation are proposed – parents' clubs, workshops and master classes, a family creative studio with elements of art therapy, dialogic reading practices, home tasks designed for joint performance and digital micro-modules – together with the technology of an individual educational route of the parent. Particular attention is paid to the continuity between the results achieved in preschool age and the further cognitive and emotional development of the child at the stage of primary education. The problems that limit the effectiveness of parental education are identified and proposals for overcoming them are formulated.*

Keywords: preschool education, family, pedagogical competence of parents, parental education, pedagogical partnership, home learning environment, elements



of art therapy, dialogic reading, individual educational route, continuity with primary education, “Ilk qadam” State Curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

Family upbringing takes place not in specially arranged sessions but in the flow of ordinary days: while dressing, at the table, before sleep, in a quarrel over a toy. Precisely this continuity, reinforced by an emotional closeness that no institution can reproduce, makes the home the strongest developmental environment of a preschool child. Contemporary preschool education acknowledges the fact and treats the mother, the father or the grandmother not as the addressee of a service but as a co-author of the child's development. Acknowledgement by itself, however, changes little. What the child actually receives at home is decided by the skill with which the adult behaves in those ordinary episodes: whether he hears the need behind a whim, whether he turns a walk into a conversation, whether he is able to hold back his own irritation. For this reason the accent of cooperation is shifting away from the arrangement of measures towards the deliberate growth of the adult's own educational capacity.

In Uzbekistan this shift rests on a legal foundation. The legislation on preschool upbringing, the “Ilk qadam” State Curriculum and the programme documents of the reform grant the family the status of a subject of upbringing, and they place the growth of the parents' pedagogical culture among the direct duties of the institution. Since the number of children attending preschool institutions has multiplied within a few years, this duty has ceased to be selective: an ordinary group today gathers families whose educational resources, budgets of time and expectations of the institution differ profoundly.



In daily practice, however, the duty is most often discharged through one-directional enlightenment: a talk at a meeting, a poster in the corridor, a leaflet, a message in the group chat. Knowledge delivered in this way is remembered but not used. Questioning and observation reveal a stable picture: an adult reproduces the correct formulas about reading, play and patience without difficulty, and in the same minute cannot lean on them in a real episode, because the episode contains the child's protest, the adult's fatigue and ten minutes left before leaving the house. It is this distance between what the parent knows and what the parent does that constitutes the true problem field of cooperation and defines the relevance of the present work.

The article therefore sets itself the task of substantiating the essence, the structure and the levels of the pedagogical competence of parents of preschool children, and of working out the content, the forms and the technology of its formation in conditions of partnership with the preschool institution.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODS

The problem is supported theoretically by conceptions that describe the developmental function of the adult. In the cultural-historical tradition of L.S. Vygotsky [4] a child's higher functions grow out of shared action with an adult who organizes that action, puts it into words and gradually hands it over to the child. The parent holds this mediating position longer and more often than anyone else, from which it follows that the manner of his mediation is not a private trait of character but a pedagogical magnitude: it can be described, measured and cultivated.

U. Bronfenbrenner [5] adds an argument of a different order. In his model the driving force of development is the proximal process, that is, the regular reciprocal exchange between the child and the people nearest to him, while the ties between the settings of his life form the mesosystem. Translated into practice, this means that



ten minutes of competent daily conversation at home outweigh an impressive count of events held in the group.

Among the six types of partnership, J.L. Epstein [6] puts the support of parenting first: the institution is obliged not merely to inform the family but to help it build a developing domestic life. K.V. Hoover-Dempsey and H.M. Sandler [7] disclosed the inner mechanism of this process – an adult acts when he includes upbringing in his own role and trusts his ability to affect the outcome, and every episode handled successfully strengthens that trust, which in turn produces the next action. Having summarized a broad body of empirical work, C. Desforges and A. Abouchaar [8] concluded that the quality of the domestic learning environment forecasts a child's progress more reliably than the parent's attendance at institutional events. The continuum from involvement to engagement traced by J. Goodall and C. Montgomery [9] describes the same movement, and its upper part is simply unattainable for an adult who does not know what to do.

Because the addressee of this work is a grown-up person, its design leans on the principles of andragogy formulated by M. Knowles [10]: an adult arrives at learning with a problem rather than with a topic, he builds on the experience he already has, and he discards any content that cannot be used tomorrow. Reviews of the OECD [11] point in the same direction, tying the effects of early childhood education and care to the quality of daily interactions rather than to the density of programme measures.

Two studies are of particular importance for the substantiation of the content of parental education. The work of M.A. Alimova devoted to art therapy as a means of overcoming cognitive and emotional difficulties among young learners [12] shows that the tools of creative expression – drawing, work with colour, modelling, the creation of images and stories – give the child an accessible, non-verbal channel for the expression of experiences and thereby reduce emotional tension and remove



the barriers that hinder cognitive activity. Transferred into the space of the family, these tools become a form that requires no special equipment and is therefore realistically accessible to the parent. The second work of the same author, devoted to the methodological improvement of the development of critical thinking skills in primary school students in native language and reading lessons [13], demonstrates which intellectual abilities become the subject of systematic work at the next educational stage: the ability to ask questions to a text, to compare, to establish cause-effect relations and to substantiate one's own judgement in the mother tongue. These abilities do not arise in the first grade; their foundation is laid in the preschool years, in the everyday conversations, the joint reading and the questions of the adult. Taken together, the two studies allow the content of parental education to be built not as a set of general appeals, but as the mastery of concrete emotional and cognitive practices whose effect extends beyond preschool age.

National pedagogy has examined domestic upbringing and the pedagogical culture of the family within the traditions of preschool and family pedagogy, while the "Ilk qadam" State Curriculum [2] names partnership with the family among its guiding principles and turns the educator towards an individual route of each child's development – a task that presupposes a permanently open channel between the group and the home. Parental competence itself, however, is usually characterized in general cultural terms, whereas its internal structure, its measurable indicators and the technology of its formation remain insufficiently elaborated.

Several methods were combined in the work. The conceptual apparatus was refined by analysing and generalizing pedagogical and psychological sources together with the normative acts that govern the sphere. Competence itself was described by means of structural and functional modelling, which allowed its parts to be shown as a working system with inputs and outcomes instead of a list of desirable qualities. The content of the modules was verified through expert



assessment; foreign and domestic practice of parental education was compared; and empirical material was gathered by questioning and interviewing mothers, fathers and educators, by observing joint activities of children and adults, and by level-based diagnostics using the criteria set out below.

RESULTS

In this study the pedagogical competence of parents is understood as an integral characteristic of the adult raising the child, which is expressed in the readiness and the ability to create a developing and emotionally safe home environment, to select ways of interaction adequate to the age and the individual features of the child, and to analyse and correct one's own educational practice. The key distinction of this notion from the notion of pedagogical enlightenment consists in the fact that competence is not knowledge as such, but knowledge realized in action and confirmed by its result.

The analysis made it possible to distinguish five interrelated components of such competence. The motivational and value-based component includes the acceptance of the educational function as one's own responsibility rather than as a duty delegated to the institution, and a stable interest in the child's development. The cognitive component covers knowledge of age norms and of their natural variability, understanding of the developmental role of play, speech and emotions, and orientation in the requirements of the state curriculum. The communicative and emotional component comprises emotional acceptance, the ability to listen to the child and to name feelings, and the ability to act in a conflict situation without pressure and without evaluative labelling. The activity-related and technological component is the ability to organize developing activity in everyday conditions: joint play and creative activity, dialogic reading, a reasonable daily routine and the regulation of screen time. The reflective and evaluative component is the ability to



analyse one's own reactions and their consequences, to accept the educator's feedback constructively and to correct one's methods independently.

The structure of competence, together with the criteria and indicators corresponding to each component, is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Structure, criteria and indicators of the pedagogical competence of parents

Component	Criterion	Main indicators
Motivational and value-based	Value-based attitude towards the child and towards one's own educational role	recognition of upbringing as one's own professional-level duty; sustained interest in the child's development; readiness for cooperation with the institution
Cognitive	Knowledge of age norms and of the mechanisms of development	knowledge of the age characteristics of the preschool child; understanding of the role of play, speech and emotions; awareness of the requirements of the "Ilk qadam" Curriculum



Component	Criterion	Main indicators
Communicative and emotional	Ability to build emotionally safe communication	emotional acceptance and support of the child; ability to listen and to name feelings; resolution of conflicts without pressure and labelling
Activity-related and technological	Ability to organize developing activity in everyday home life	joint play and creative activity; dialogic reading; a reasonable daily routine and regulation of screen time
Reflective and evaluative	Ability to analyse and correct one's own educational practice	analysis of one's own reactions and their consequences; constructive use of the educator's feedback; independent correction of methods of upbringing

On the basis of these indicators three levels of formation of parental competence were distinguished. At the adaptive level the parent acts according to the model of his own childhood or to fragmentary advice, reacts to the child's behaviour situationally, and perceives the institution as the sole bearer of pedagogical knowledge. At the situational level the parent possesses general knowledge, applies the recommended methods when the situation is favourable, but loses them under emotional tension or lack of time. At the constructive level the parent independently selects a method in accordance with the state and the interests



of the child, consciously builds a developing environment at home, initiates the exchange of information with the educator and reflects on the results of his own actions. Diagnostics conducted at the beginning of the interaction reveals not a single level but a profile of levels, since the components are formed unevenly: a high cognitive component is frequently combined with a weak reflective one.

In accordance with the identified structure, the content of parental education was designed in the form of four modules, each of which is realized through forms that require the active action of the parent rather than his presence. The modules and the corresponding forms are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Modules of parental education and the forms of their implementation

Module	Basic content	Leading forms
“The child and the logic of his development”	age norms and their variability, the crisis periods, individual differences, the developmental role of play and speech	mini-lectures with practical tasks, individual consultations, analysis of video fragments of children’s activity
“Emotions and communication in the family”	emotional acceptance, naming and regulation of feelings, discipline without pressure, behaviour in conflict situations	practice-oriented workshops, case analysis, the family creative studio with elements of art therapy



Module	Basic content	Leading forms
“Developing activity at home”	joint play, dialogic reading, questions and reasoning, comparison and cause-effect relations, tasks for joint performance	master classes, home tasks designed for joint performance, the child’s portfolio, the “question of the week” format
“The family and the institution as partners”	rights and duties of the parties, two-way feedback, participation in the discussion of the group’s plans	the parents’ club, design workshops, the work of the parents’ council, two-way digital channels

Of particular practical value is the family creative studio – a short joint session of the child and the adult built on the tools of creative expression. Such a session simultaneously solves several tasks: it gives the child an additional channel for the expression of experiences, it shows the parent how emotional support may be organized without moralizing, and it creates for the educator a situation of natural observation of the interaction between the adult and the child. No less important is the practice of dialogic reading, in which the adult does not simply read the text aloud but asks questions, invites the child to predict, to compare and to explain, and thereby forms the foundation of the intellectual abilities that will subsequently become the subject of systematic work in the lessons of the mother tongue and reading.



The development of competence proved to be effective when it was organized not as a sequence of general events but as an individual educational route of the parent. This technology includes five consecutive steps. The first is diagnostics, which reveals the profile of competence and the specific deficits of the particular family. The second is the joint design of the route, at which the educator and the parent agree on two or three realistic tasks for the nearest period; the voluntary character of this agreement is a condition of its fulfilment. The third is practice-oriented training, in which the method is not described but tried out – in a workshop, a master class or a session of the family studio. The fourth, and the most frequently omitted, is the support of transfer: a short home task, an agreement on a form of feedback, the possibility of asking a question and receiving an answer within a few days. The fifth is the monitoring of dynamics against the indicators of Table 1 and the correction of the route for the following cycle.

The route is built differently for different families. A young family with a first child needs above all the cognitive and the communicative parts of competence; a large family, which already possesses practical experience, needs reflection and the individualization of its approach to each of the children. Where the mother or the father earns a living abroad and the child is being raised by a grandmother or another relative, the route is agreed with the adult who actually answers for him and includes ways of keeping the child's contact with the absent parent alive. A family bringing up a child with special educational needs requires coordination with specialists, a slower pace and, most of all, a supportive rather than an instructing position on the part of the educator; here the everyday skill of the nearest adult often decides how successfully the child enters the company of peers.

DISCUSSION

The findings raise a number of debatable points. The first concerns the measure of success. Effectiveness is still counted in the currency of the institution:



how many sessions were held and how many chairs were occupied. Such figures describe the activity of the staff and say nothing about the family. A competence-based logic demands another measure – a change in the domestic practice itself. The assessment should therefore record how many families have really taken a new method into use, how the profile of competence has moved against the indicators given above, what the home environment of development looks like, and how many ideas coming from families have found their way into the plans of the group.

The second point is an ethical one, and it decides whether partnership is possible at all. Work on the competence of an adult slides easily into the appraisal of that adult, and any appraisal provokes defence and withdrawal from contact. The educator's speech must therefore be free of verdicts about the child and about the mother or father alike, participation must stay voluntary, and everything said in an individual conversation must stay between its participants. Competence in this context is a resource offered in support, not an instrument of supervision.

The third issue concerns the emotional foundation of development, which is frequently displaced by the cognitive one in the expectations of parents. The study of the possibilities of art therapy in overcoming the cognitive and emotional difficulties of young learners [12] shows that emotional tension directly restricts cognitive productivity, and that creative expression is one of the most accessible ways of reducing it. In the practice of family education this conclusion has a concrete methodological consequence: joint drawing, modelling and the composition of stories should be presented to parents not as leisure but as a tool of emotional support and of preparation for the demands of school life, including the difficulties of adaptation to the first grade.

The fourth issue is the continuity between preschool and primary education. The methodology of developing critical thinking skills in primary school students in the lessons of the mother tongue and reading [13] presupposes that the child comes



to school already able to ask a question to a text, to compare, to notice a contradiction and to substantiate a judgement in the mother tongue. These abilities are formed long before school, in the dialogue of the adult with the child, and they depend directly on whether the parent asks the child open questions or confines himself to instructions. Parental competence formed in preschool age therefore possesses a delayed effect that is manifested in the results of primary education; and this circumstance is an argument for considering work with the family not as a local task of the preschool institution but as an element of the continuity of the whole educational system.

The fifth point concerns the educator. In the proposed model he works as a teacher of grown-ups, and that calls for abilities which do not appear by themselves: leading a personal conversation, describing a child without sticking labels on him, holding a group discussion, meeting resistance and disagreement. Observation shows that the hardest part of the work lies not in preparing events but in precisely such conversations, when something in the family has gone wrong. Individual work also consumes hours that the daily timetable rarely reserves; while these hours are not counted as part of the job, a competence-oriented partnership survives only on paper. The uneven access of families to technology has to be reckoned with as well: short digital modules widen the reach of parental education for employed parents, yet for households with weak connectivity or little digital experience the customary channels must be kept open.

CONCLUSION

The study allows the conclusion that the pedagogical competence of parents is the content-related core of the partnership between the preschool educational institution and the family. Organizational conditions determine whether cooperation takes place at all, whereas the competence of the adult determines what the child actually receives in the family every day. Such competence has a systemic structure



that unites motivational and value-based, cognitive, communicative and emotional, activity-related and technological, and reflective and evaluative components; it is formed unevenly, which makes the diagnostics of a profile rather than of a single level necessary; and it develops only in conditions where the parent acts, and not merely listens.

Several practical steps follow from the study. The growth of parental competence deserves a separate line in the yearly plan of the institution, with its own diagnostic tools and its own indicators. One-off enlightening talks are worth replacing with formats in which the adult acts – workshops, master classes, sessions of the family studio, tasks performed at home together with the child – and every such format needs a follow-up that helps carry the method across into domestic life. Interaction with each family is better organized as a route agreed voluntarily with the adult rather than as a schedule announced to him. The content of that route should hold both the emotional practices of creative expression and the cognitive practices of dialogic reading and shared reasoning, which link preschool years with the demands of the first grade. Families differ, so the route differs too, with particular care for those raising a child with special needs and for those where the child lives with relatives. Digital channels should work in two directions while the customary ones remain available to families with limited access. Finally, the preparation and the qualification courses of preschool educators need units on teaching adults, on giving feedback and on settling conflicts. Carried out together, these steps turn work with the family from the transmission of advice into the joint growing of educational competence, whose final beneficiary is the child.

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