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Fairy-tales for modern gifted preschoolers: developing creativity, moral values and coherent world outlook

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Abstract

The article gives the outline of a case study supported by Southern Federal University and conducted in a number of pre-school educational establishments in Rostov-on-Don, Rostov Oblast and Sochi (South of Russia) in 2010-2016. The research included several stages: detecting gifted preschoolers (by using inventories for kids and their parents) and providing pedagogical support for overall development of their world outlook and values. The authors describe a systematic approach to developing giftedness which includes use of fairy-tales, active gaming technologies and work with letters. The above techniques contribute to harmonious psychological and cognitive development of preschoolers.

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Introduction

Eminent children have been born throughout the history of mankind. For nearly a century so far, educators have been trying to detect, comprehend and explain giftedness as well as to find ways for its efficient development. As modern researches state, high aptitudes or gifts can be observed more easily and directly in young children because at this stage of their development environmental influences and systematic learning have only a slight impact on children's abilities [1]. In this respect, work with gifted preschoolers is of special importance. The Federal State Educational Standard of Preschool Education of Russia stipulates that kindergartens should focus on developing children's cognitive interests, inquisitiveness and motivation. In terms

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of systematic value-oriented and activity-based approaches the modern preschool education model assumes that children gain knowledge about the world around through different types of activity.

Growing up in the information space, modern children should learn not only about the outer, evident properties of the objects and phenomena that surround them, but also get to know deeper relations between them. Experiencing the world around, a modern child gets a wide range of impressions as a result of perceiving reality via modern technologies at a high speed and in bright images, but with unexpected foreshortenings. Opportunities offered today by cinema, television and computer games, on the one hand, cause many-sided, comprehensive cognition of objects and phenomena of the world around. On the other hand, this perception of reality is frequently superficial and simplified. This contradiction prompted us to work out a system of activities appealing to children (using cartoons, visual aids, computer games, etc.) to be used not only as illustrative material, but also as stimuli for creative and critical thinking about the world around.

As for the theoretical and methodological background, the given case study is based on the model of giftedness, worked out by J. Renzulli and called the “three-ring” model [2]. According to the researcher, three intertwined components, such as intellectual abilities, motivation (zest) and creativity form an apparently gifted individual. This concept was further elaborated by A.M. Matyushkin who also touches upon the issue of giftedness from the point of view of an individual’s creative potential [3]. He takes a look at creativity as a crucial condition for development, a fundamental feature of one’s mentality. As for the structural components of endowments, in this respect, he resorts to the dominating role of cognitive motivation and creative research expressed in detection of something new, aimed at finding solutions to problems. Research activity is stimulated by a novelty that a gifted child sees and finds by himself in the world around. Giftedness stipulates an ability to create new ideas and search for original solutions.

The given research is aimed at the following objective: to provide theoretical grounds, develop and implement a model of pedagogical support for developing a coherent world view in gifted preschoolers. The main aim is to encourage creativity, make children aware of cultural values and provide a gradual transition from their naïve world view to a scientific picture of the world.

1. Methods

As for the scope of the study, it was conducted in 2010-2016 in a number of preschool educational institutions of Rostov-on-Don, Bataysk and Sochi. Over this period, more than 200 preschoolers aged 5-7 and their parents took part in the research which included several stages. At the first preliminary stage the gifted kids were selected by using multiple diagnostic tools such as: diagnostics of children's giftedness for parents by the American scientists I.G. Hall, N. Skinner adapted to Russian kindergartens by Yu.Z. Gilbukh [4], methods for detecting giftedness by V.S. Yurkevich, adapted for a kindergarten [5], the Gilford Test adapted by I.S. Averina and E.I. Shcheblanova [6], the system for identification of giftedness by A.I. Savenkov [7].

As soon as a child was identified as gifted, he/she became a participant of the pedagogical and psychological support program which was provided by the pre-school organization they were part of. The program of pedagogical support included 3 main types of activities: work with fairytales (the classical stories about Speckled Hen, Little Red Riding Hood and ancient parables); drama techniques and action games; games with letters.

Children who participated in the research underwent diagnostic procedures twice: at the age of 5-6 when they just entered the program of giftedness development and at the age of 7, after taking part in the program and just before going to school. The initial score was compared to the final score. 87 % of the kids who participated in the program of pedagogical support showed higher scores at the final stage of the research (the scores ranging from 45 to 60 %).

Regarding the main criteria of development of the coherent world outlook, the following aspects were taken into account:

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