

Main Directions of Comprehensive Preparation Of 6–7-Year-Old Children for School Education

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Abstract: The article examines the main directions of comprehensive preparation of 6–7-year-old children for school education. The study analyzes the age-related psychological and physiological characteristics of preschool children and substantiates the importance of integrated preparation for successful adaptation to school learning. Particular attention is paid to the development of cognitive processes, speech, sensory abilities, fine and gross motor skills, social-emotional competencies, self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivational readiness. The article highlights the significance of communication with adults and peers, the formation of social roles and behavioral norms, and the development of voluntary attention, memory, thinking, and imagination as essential prerequisites for school readiness. It is emphasized that comprehensive school preparation should be viewed as a multidimensional process that encompasses intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and personal development and creates favorable conditions for children's successful transition to primary education.

Keywords: School readiness, preschool education, comprehensive preparation, children aged 6–7 years, cognitive development, social-emotional development, psychological readiness, speech development, sensory development, self-regulation, motivation, fine motor skills, adaptation to school, personality development, preschool children.

Introduction: During the preschool period, intensive development and improvement of the musculoskeletal and cardiovascular systems occur, along with the development of fine muscles and certain parts of the central nervous system. The body weight of a 6–7-year-old child increases by approximately 200 grams per month, while height increases by about 0.5 cm. The body proportions also begin to change. On average, children's height ranges from 113 to 122 cm, and their average weight is between 21 and 25 kg. The areas of the brain begin to take on a structure that is almost similar to that of adults. The motor areas are well developed. The process of bone strengthening

continues, although the curvatures of the spine are not yet stable. The development of gross and, especially, fine motor skills continues. The coordination of the hand muscles develops intensively. General physical development is closely related to the development of the child's fine motor skills. Training and exercising the fingers are considered important means of enhancing children's intellectual development, improving speech, and preparing them for writing.

During the period of school preparation, a clear change in the types of children's activities can be observed. Whereas the leading activity during preschool age consists of role-playing games, children of primary

school age show a strong inclination toward the educational process and learning activities. The psychologist D.B. Elkonin emphasized that the psychological characteristics of 7-year-old children's readiness for school education are manifested through their attitudes toward the processes occurring in the surrounding world, the formation of social skills, self-control, and self-evaluation. A distinctive feature of this age stage is the active development of cognitive and intellectual psychological processes. Children begin to perform voluntary actions such as observation and visual search. At this age, sensory standards—shape, color, and size—are fully mastered. The development of spatial awareness continues. Children begin to operate with concepts such as up, down, and other directions. In addition, a clear understanding of the concepts of right and left should already be formed. However, children of this age may still make mistakes in situations that require them to consider several different characteristics simultaneously.

Toward the end of the preschool period, voluntary attention begins to develop. Children become capable of consciously directing and maintaining their attention on specific objects and activities. The stability of attention increases to approximately 20–25 minutes, and the attention span encompasses 7–8 objects. Children also become capable of perceiving and interpreting ambiguous or dual images. By the end of preschool age, voluntary forms of mental activity emerge. Children are now able to examine objects purposefully, engage in intentional observation, and demonstrate voluntary attention. As a result, elements of voluntary memory begin to develop. Voluntary memory manifests itself when children independently set goals for memorizing and recalling information. It is essential to encourage children's desire to remember information in every possible way, because this serves as a prerequisite not only for the development of memory but also for the successful development of other cognitive abilities, including comprehension, attention, thinking, and imagination. The emergence of voluntary memory contributes to the development of mediated memory, which is considered the most productive form of memorization. The first steps in this process are determined by the characteristics of the material to be remembered, such as its vividness, familiarity, uniqueness, visual appeal, and other similar

features. During this period, preschool children can also be purposefully taught methods of classification and grouping as effective strategies for memorization and recall. As in earlier stages, visual-figurative thinking remains the leading form of thinking. However, toward the end of the preschool period, verbal-logical thinking begins to develop. This involves the development of the ability to use words and understand the logic of reasoning and judgments. Adult guidance is particularly important at this stage because children's reasoning may still contain elements of illogical thinking, for example, when comparing the size or quantity of objects. The development of concepts also begins during the preschool years. Fully developed verbal-logical, conceptual, or abstract thinking is formed during adolescence. By the senior preschool age, children become capable of identifying cause-and-effect relationships and finding solutions to problem situations.

This period of a child's life is characterized by particularly active development of imagination. Initially, imagination is predominantly reproductive, enabling children to visualize fairy-tale characters and imaginary situations. Later, it develops into creative imagination, which allows children to generate entirely new images and ideas. This stage is especially important for the development of fantasy and creativity. The development of grammar and vocabulary also continues, and speech becomes increasingly fluent. Children's vocabulary expands, and they begin to use collective nouns, synonyms, antonyms, and adjectives. If adults frequently read to children and communicate with them, by this age both monologic speech (explanatory, interpretive, and narrative speech) and conversational skills become well developed. Written speech also begins to emerge. Children's vocabulary increases to approximately 3,000 words. One of the major changes in the consciousness of preschool children is the emergence of an "internal plan of action." This development enables children to form various mental representations not only visually but also consciously and intentionally.

The formation of the child's self-awareness and understanding of the "self-image" (the "I" image) determines the development of reflective abilities, that is, the capacity to analyze oneself, take responsibility for the goals and outcomes of one's actions, and

understand one's own experiences and emotions. This psychological development constitutes the foundation of the child's moral and personal growth. The most significant new formation in the psychological and personality development of children aged 6–7 years is the hierarchy of motives. The motives expressed as “I must do it” and “I can do it” gradually begin to prevail over the motive “I want to do it.” This transition indicates the emergence of self-regulation, responsibility, and readiness for systematic learning activities at school. “The formation of a child as a personality begins during the preschool period. At this stage, the child's social orientation is determined, and social skills are developed. This particularly highlights the significance of preschool educational institutions as organizational and social forms of upbringing preschool-aged children” [84].

The development of self-awareness and, on this basis, the emergence of inner feelings by the end of preschool age give rise to new needs. As a result, play, which had been the leading type of activity throughout the entire preschool period, can no longer fully satisfy the child's needs. At this stage, children develop a desire to go beyond the boundaries of their purely childhood life and seek to occupy a place in socially significant activities. In other words, children acquire a new social need—the desire to assume the “position of a school student.” This aspiration is considered one of the most important outcomes and distinguishing characteristics of the personal and psychological development of children aged 6–7 years. By the age of 6–7, children begin to understand themselves not only within the limits of their own practical actions but also become capable of understanding and analyzing, in an age-appropriate manner, their relationships with the surrounding environment and their place among other people. Understanding oneself as a subject within the system of social relationships leads to the emergence of an awareness of one's social self, or the development of the social “I.” According to M.N. Tereshenko, preparing children for school is a priority task of particular importance under contemporary conditions. It is a complex and multidimensional process that encompasses all spheres of a child's life. Psychological readiness for school is one of the most essential and significant aspects of this task [96].

“In connection with the transition from preschool

educational institutions to school, a number of other problems arise, including the issue of personality development during the seven-year developmental crisis, the complexity of a child's assumption of new social roles, adaptation difficulties, and success in educational activities” [81, p. 115]. At this age, children's self-esteem generally tends to be overly positive and idealized. Children are highly dependent on external evaluations because they are not yet capable of forming an objective opinion about themselves. Their self-image is largely constructed on the basis of the evaluations they hear from peers and adults. Preschool-aged children have a strong desire to be good and to be the best. They become deeply upset by failure and react vividly and emotionally to changes in adults' attitudes and moods. During this period, distinctions between popular and unpopular children within peer groups become clearly evident. For preschool children, the leading need is communication both with peers and with adults. As in earlier stages, the leading activity remains role-playing games. However, the distinctive feature of games at this age is that children begin to master and enact complex patterns of human interaction and experiment with major life situations that they observe in their environment. Games gradually become more complex and sometimes acquire special meanings that adults do not always understand. At this stage, children are capable of monitoring the entire play environment, keeping track of all participants, and modifying their behavior or roles according to the requirements of the game and the actions of other players. For children aged 6–7 years, communication becomes situational-personal in nature. This means that communication is no longer limited to the immediate situation but increasingly reflects events in terms of “what happened” or “what will happen.” The main content of communication consists of the world of people, rules of behavior, and natural phenomena. Adults are regarded as carriers of social norms, social relationships, and rules governing interactions among people, as they help children understand the nature of the social world. The leading need in communication at this stage is the need for mutual understanding and emotional sharing. Children willingly share both their positive and negative emotional experiences with adults. The primary task of parents and educators is to accept children's emotions

without diminishing their significance in the child's life. The structural components of the social-emotional development of children aged 6–7 years are formed through the acquisition of social processes, social norms, and social roles, based directly on state educational requirements and indicators. Children demonstrate their understanding of social processes by finding practical solutions in difficult situations, expressing their opinions about the behavior of others, communicating easily with familiar people, and following social rules of behavior such as what is permitted and prohibited, what is good and bad, and what is necessary.

Children are able to regulate their behavior in public places and on the street and communicate with adults and peers while observing accepted norms of etiquette and moral conduct. Children perform various social roles in different environments. In preschool educational institutions, they assume the role of a preschool learner; within the family, they perform the role of a son or daughter; and in public places, they act as citizens. Children fulfill each of these roles according to their individual characteristics. For example, in a preschool educational institution, children follow all the teacher's instructions, actively participate in activities, and help their peers. At home, however, they may seek affection from their parents and engage in activities with their support and assistance.

When discussing a child's social and psychological readiness for school education, it usually refers to a certain level of mental development that serves as the foundation for primary education and is characterized by being systematic, organized, multidimensional, goal-oriented, and logically interconnected. In addition to the level of mental development required for schooling, it is also important to consider such factors as the child's living conditions and activities, individual characteristics, state of health, methodological preparedness, and acquisition of basic skills. These factors constitute the objective aspects of a child's psychological readiness for school.

There is also a subjective aspect of a child's psychological readiness for school. By this age, children develop certain perceptions about learning and acquiring knowledge. Some children eagerly aspire to attend school with great enthusiasm, whereas others

may strongly reject the idea of schooling altogether. Negative attitudes toward learning often arise as a result of adults frightening children about school. Similarly, stories from older siblings about school and excessive pressure at home to study may also contribute to negative attitudes toward education. Consequently, children may experience difficulties in entering the educational environment and encounter various psychological barriers. "In preschool pedagogy, there are different approaches to the development of children's emotional perception and sensory abilities. Such approaches were developed by F. Fröbel, M. Montessori, O. Decroly, E. I. Tikheeva, and others" [85]. Sensory development plays an important role in the development of children's speech. When children have sufficiently developed skills for accurately distinguishing the shapes and colors of objects, they form clear ideas about the properties of the things around them and become able to differentiate and describe them. This, in turn, promotes the rapid development of skills such as modeling, drawing, and constructing various objects from clay, paper, and fabric. The development of children's ability to distinguish the shape, size, structure, color, and specific characteristics of surrounding objects is an essential condition for the formation of cognitive activity. As sensory abilities develop, children become acquainted with various objects and materials, natural phenomena, and the worlds of animals and plants. As a result, they become capable of understanding the distinctive features of objects and memorizing the words that denote their names. This, in turn, occupies a special place in the development of children's speech and in ensuring their readiness for school.

The process of developing learners' speech is primarily and directly related to their ability to accurately perceive and understand reality through sensory experiences. Children's speech is an intellectual and cognitive phenomenon that manifests itself in the process of expressing their thoughts. During the process of preparing children for school, particular attention is first given to the development of their oral speech. As children's vocabulary expands and their speech activity develops, their thinking processes become increasingly intensified. In this process, children's sensations, perceptions, emotions, memory, and imagination develop and begin to manifest clearly

in their everyday activities. Consequently, the development of speech serves not only as a means of communication but also as an essential condition for cognitive growth and successful school readiness.

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