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PECULIARITIES OF TRAINING CHILDREN'S INDEPENDENCE IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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Abstract

The issue of training children's independence in physical activity is interesting first of all due to the fact that autonomy is appropriate for small children. This necessity of the child's growing organism should be supported and developed. Some researchers state that independence does not appear suddenly, it is developed from the early childhood with simple skills and habits. To develop independence in physical activity a certain amount of knowledge on the usefulness of physical exercise, application of athletic facilities, equipment and apparel is necessary. The regularity has been proved that training independence depends on children's understanding of the role of movements, physical exercises, and entertaining nature of the material and methods of teaching it to children. The experimental work showed that the greater knowledge and physical skills children have, the more independence, activity, initiative and creativity they show. The conducted research has specified the concept "independence in physical activity" in preschoolers. The experiment has revealed characteristic peculiarities of preschoolers' independence in physical activity: its dependence on visualization means and methods of teaching. The main conditions of training independence are the opportunity for training independence – necessary amount of children's knowledge in physical culture and possibility to apply them in activity; entertaining nature of the contents and methods of teaching; developing understanding the importance of the physical culture by preschoolers; integrating different activities with the account of individually-differentiated approach and learner's centered approach; athletic skillfulness of the pre-school teacher, his/her creative approach to organizing independent physical activity of the preschoolers.

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1. Introduction

Training independence is important for preschoolers' physical education and a person's harmonious development.

The issues of independence and activity are studied in the works by Esipov (1961), Arkin (1967), Pidkasiy (1972), Kuzovkova (1975), Rubinshtein (2002), Doroshenko et al. (1994), Amonashvili (1986), Pervomaiskii (1985), Gus'kova (1988), Babaeva (2000) and others.

The authors denote that independence is one of the leading personality features demonstrated by the ability to determine the aim, fulfill its accomplishment by oneself, be responsible for one's activity, act consciously and using initiative not only in a familiar surrounding but in new ones which require unconventional solutions. Some researchers suggest that independence is peculiar for a grown-up person. Others claim that it is peculiar for teenagers already; one more point of view that independence is peculiar to preschoolers.

Some researchers claim that independence does not appear suddenly, it is trained from early childhood basing on the acquired simple skills and habits.

As specialists claim, independence is a mental state of a person, which includes: ability to determine the aim; to recall the final aim and organize one's activities so as to achieve it; ability to do simple and complex actions without help, to correlate the result with the initial intention (Gus'kova, 1988).

2. Problem Statement

Training independence depends on children's understanding the role of movements, physical exercises, entertaining nature of the material and methods of its teaching to children.

3. Research Questions

The article provides theoretical grounds to the issue of training independence in physical activity of the preschoolers, the stages of training preschoolers' independence in physical activity have been determined.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to improve the process of physical education in pre-schools.

5. Research Methods

The methodological grounds of the work is combination of different methods: theoretical analysis methods (comparative, retrospective); diagnostic methods (questioners, interviews, polling, psychological testing, testing the level of independence and others.); pedagogical observations; pedagogical experiment; studying and generalizing the experience of leading educational establishments on physical education; mathematical statistics methods.

6. Findings

At the beginning of the experiment we supposed that for the independence in physical activity to appear it is necessary to give a certain amount of knowledge on the usefulness of physical exercises, application of the athletic equipment, facilities and so on. The first stage has been determined (Gus'kova, 1988; Kuzovkova, 1975), during that stage the preschoolers' initiative was developed in the course of prearranged training and taught to plan physical activity. The success of this stage mainly depended on the grown-up person: tutor's respect to a child, necessary support and help. The tutor suggested a child to choose what exercises to do, what athletic equipment to use, which children to play with, what exercises to do together, what roles to play, what are the rules.

Before helping, it was suggested to children to think what initial position to choose in order to do the exercise the best. Cooperative learning trained children to consult with each other and to ask each other's opinion. The precondition at this stage is creating the emotional disposition in children and necessity in independent physical activity. For these purposes the talks on themes: "What is health?", "How to become a powerful man" and others were conducted. The talks were conducted in a "feel at ease" setting and accompanied by visual materials. As the result, the children became interested in physical activity, desired to do exercises independently, which was proved by their questions about further activity.

Object oriented athletic-educational work on developing the preschoolers' independence in physical activity supposed a certain level of tutor's training. That is why; a great attention was paid at the first stage of the experiment to the increase of the theoretical background of tutors and parents. Tutorials and talks were organized for this purpose.

At the second stage of the independence development in physical activity, object oriented actions for achieving a result were formed as well as diligence, perseverance in achieving a particular goal, attention, concentration on fulfilling separate actions.

A big attention was paid to the tutor's guidance of preschoolers' independent physical activity. Tutors helped children to estimate their abilities, taught them to set goals, to solve every task in combination with the closest and furthest ones and lead the activity to the end.

At the second stage of developing preschoolers' independence in physical activity the leading factor was organization of athletic-educational lessons. Once a week physical-educational lessons were conducted, aimed at the development of the healthy life style: "How to start a morning", "Why do we need morning exercises?", "Magic jump rope", "Respiratory exercises" and others.

Visual material - cards - was actively used during the lessons. It was noted that working with cards increases children's interest and motivation for studies and helps to develop independence. At first, children got interested in pictures on the cards, then they wanted to do the exercise shown in the picture, then to think out variants of the exercises: from the initial position, by the title.

The significance of working with cards is that even children with low independence became more independent doing exercises. Doing complex exercise, looking at cards, a child tried not to make mistakes, remembered the rules quickly and could explain its meaning.

Using cards increased attention and interest to the physical activity. The children liked the cards developed by Demeter (1972), which increased their independence and activity with image description of physical exercises: “A Red Indian on patrol”, “Ballet dancer’s warm-up activity” and others.

Regularity was proved that developing independence relies on children’s understanding the role of motions, physical exercises, entertaining nature of the material and methods of its presentation.

For fixing knowledge a work has been conducted in experimental groups on developing the abilities to organize active games (“Let’s teach Olympionik to play active games”) and developing ability to do exercises by cards in their free time (“Let’s teach Olympionik to do exercises by cards”).

Application of these exercises enhanced mental activity of children broadened their scope of view, developing their independence, creativity.

Organization of physical activity and developing independence suggested facilities: “Athlete’s corner” was arranged for independent physical activity; diverse material on physical culture was introduced in preschoolers’ groups which was periodically renewed: cards, equipment, apparel, symbols, pictures about different sports, sportsmen, didactic games “Sport domino”, “Dress a sportsman before the competition” and so on. These games enhanced development of cognitive processes (memory, thinking, imagination and others), which is an important condition for preparing children to school.

The experiment showed that the more knowledge, physical activity skills children have the more they independent, active, show initiative, creativity.

The third stage of developing independence in physical activity is self-control and self assessment. They finished not only formation of independent activity but also child’s self awareness, understanding own abilities and relation of group-mates and grown-ups to himself.

To develop child’s independence in physical activity we determined gradually increased set of actions, which he was to fulfill. Their fulfillment required certain power strain, but was adequate, caused no disenchantment with their abilities, but with a successful result increased their power.

Developing independence in children’s physical activity it was important to give adequate tasks according to the principles of physical education: no prompting, no help in what they can do independently, even with effort. The tutors followed this principle.

Developing independent physical activity of preschoolers, they were taught to work according to the task: preparing equipment to the lesson in physical education, training the most difficult elements of the exercise, after the lesson – fixing the studied exercise and so on.

Taking into account high interest of children to physical culture at this stage; the children were suggested a compromise: “You can do this exercise now with cards or play”. If the exercise is difficult the tutor controlled a child’s actions: independent choice of the initial position, checking the rules of the game.

The following tasks and situations were used to involve children into the independent physical activity:

1. The children could choose athletic equipment necessary to work with cards. “Now let’s watch how Olga and Marina will do the exercise with cards, what exercises they will do together and independently”.

2. The tutor organized the plays during the day. He chose the children who could lead the active game with the group. At first, they played according to the card and then by its name. This activity developed leading skills of a child.

3. The tutor gave a task to a child to teach the other physical activities, studied at the physical education lesson.

4. It was suggested to the children to make out the variants of the known game or create new equipment for the active game.

5. New variants of the known exercise with an object were suggested: a stick, a jumping rope, a band and others.

6. To classify cards which show children doing physical exercises for a certain group of muscles (upper limb girdle, arms, trunk, legs).

7. To show the cards in the sequence of the complex of developing exercises.

8. To classify the cards denoting the ones according to which the child does the exercise individually or in pairs.

9. To classify the cards according to the main movements: walking, running, jumping, throwing, climbing, balance.

10. To classify the cards by physical properties: strength, speed, agility, stamina, flexibility.

At the third stage of developing independence in physical activity we encouraged children to active communication with each other, analysis and assessment of own actions and actions done by other children, striving to honesty and fairness. We developed creativity, suggesting thinking out a variant of the game, exercises; to diversify the initial positions in doing exercises.

In case of failures children were supported. A child, not reaching the necessary motion result, endured his inability, suffered when his achievement did not correspond to the idea. The others supported him, inspired confidence in the game, running, and were happy that a child became independent.

In order to develop independence and activity in preschoolers the children were enriched in knowledge; created conditions motivating children to use actively received knowledge, motion skills; developed children wills, their desire to overcome difficulties, to complete the action; supported the joy from successful independent actions.

At the final stage of the research a test was done in order to check the level of preschoolers' independence in physical activity. The data analysis showed a significant improvement in independence development.

The growing dynamics of preschoolers' independence participating in the experiment proves the efficiency of this method. In particular, the number of children with a high level of independence increased by 7.8 % comparing with a control group, where this parameter decreased from 12 to 8 %. A number of children with low independence decreased in the experimental group (from 21.4 % before the experiment to 3.6 % after the experiment). These changes have been determined in the dynamics of developing independence in a preschool group (6–7 years).

These data prove the efficiency of the experimental work on developing physical independence of preschoolers.

7. Conclusion

A definition of “independence in preschoolers’ physical activity” has been specified during the experiment. It is an important personal quality which is characterized by the ability to show interest to the physical activity, creativity in physical exercises, ability to organize an active game, be active in any situations.

The experiment revealed peculiarities of preschoolers’ independence in physical activity: reliance on visualization, materials and methods of teaching.

An experimental methodology of training independence in preschoolers’ physical activity with visual aids has been developed and checked. It consists of three stages.

Cards and cognitive questions are one of the means of optimizing the process of physical education, allowing making the teaching physical activities entertaining and interesting.

The main conditions for developing independence are: children should have necessary knowledge on physical education and apply them in their activity; entertaining nature in the content and methods of study. The work is necessary aimed at developing understanding by the preschoolers the importance of physical education; integration of different kinds of activities (physical and educational) with the account of individual-differential approach on the condition of learner’s centered model of communication; tutor’s literacy in physical education, creative approach to organization of preschoolers’ independent physical activity.

Analyzing the data, we can say that the children from experimental groups achieved more profound knowledge in physical education which is one of the independence indicators.

The practical importance of the work is in possibility to apply the results in planning health-and-fitness work in preschool establishments; conducting the lessons in physical culture and organizing independent physical activity during the physical education.

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