

## PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF PREPARING CHILDREN FOR SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY

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**Abstract:** *The article is dedicated to the problem of psychological preparation of children for school learning activity. There are examined basic components of psychological preparation of children for learning activity in terms of various approaches. A particular emphasis is placed on the main dimensions on the preparation of volitional, motivational, intellectual and communicative child in relation to particularities of the learning activity in school. It highlights the interdependence between the psychological preparation of children for school and the success their adaptation to learning activity in school. Were structured a system of indicators on psychological preparation of children for school.*

**Keywords:** *training, learning task, operational actions, independence, self-control, indicators.*

### 1. Introduction

In contemporaneous educational space the issue of preparing children for school is acquiring a representational weight, all the more so as we take into account the importance of paideutic actions at the pre-school stage, given by the impact of this stage on the creation of a fundamental structure of child's personality, which is determining his further adaptation to various social contexts, especially his adaptation to school educational activity.

The problem of preparing children for school is a complex one, covering all the fields of child's life. In this paper we shall refer to certain aspects of children's psychological readiness for school, although the psychic characteristics that define the profile of the young schoolchild cannot be developed at the pre-school stage, however the creation of premises thereto is possible starting with the pre-school institution, as they represent a *sine qua non* condition of the process of preparing the child for school and of an active beginning of a systematic learning process. By means of these endeavors, we intend to point out the complexity of this subject, as well as the multitude of questions generated by the problem of children's psychological readiness for school.

The psycho-pedagogical science is showing a constant interest in the problem of children's psychological readiness for school, due to permanent changes occurring in child's psychics before school, as well as to requirements set by schools for children.

## **2. Psychological Dimensions of preparing children for learning in school**

From this perspective, the high pre-school age (5-7 years) is defined in pedagogy and psychology as a period of transition. In this sense, L. Vygotsky is characterizing the transition to school learning activity not just as a change in external circumstances, but also as a new stage with new circumstances for the development of child's personality. This happens only when the child is ready during the entire period of previous development, after overcoming the interior crisis and when the tendency to a new state appears – the status of schoolchild. The transition period is also distinguished by the changes in child's behavior, which is harder to be subjected to educational influences. As result, this is a transition stage when the child is not a „*pre-school*” child anymore, but not a „*schoolchild*” yet, a period defined by the author as a *critical* one, calling it the „*crisis at the age of 7*” [1, pag.658]. Thus, the turning points in development are characterized by the transition from a stable period to another one, by cancelling previous social situations and the appearance of new ones, changes also occur in the system of relations with the environment.

The area of examination of children's psychological readiness for school also includes the sociocultural theory of L. Vygotsky. According to the author, learning involves the psychic development. L. Vygotsky defines the zone of proximal development as the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by child's independent problem solving and the level of potential intellectual performance as determined through the performance under adult guidance. The zone of proximal development, in interaction with the zone of actual development, is gradually exploited by the child, the latter reaching a new stage of actual development, determining the appearance of a new zone of proximal development [1, pag.203]. The evolution in the learning process takes place when this learning is exceeding the actual level and requires the forces from the zone of proximal development. Essentially, in the process of preparing psychologically children for school, it is important to determine correctly the level of actual development and the level of proximal development.

D. Elkonin is defining the period of transition from kindergarten to school as a stage of change of the type of activity [8, pag.46]. Hence, the psychological preparing for school, in author's opinion, is emphasized by the change of the dominant activity. The structure and defining traits of the learning activity suppose certain abilities that the child must gather since the pre-school age, fact that would ensure his psychological preparing for school.

Child's school performance is also impelled by his volitive readiness. The volitive development involves, on the one hand, the creation of volitive qualities, on the other hand, the creation of behavior regulation skills. As result, it is necessary to develop independence and self-control in children.

Making reference to the structure of learning activity, D. Elkonin has determined that one of the main links is the learning task and the operational content. The learning task, as the author noticed, is a complex formation, consisting of an entire system of actions. The child is learning general procedures of solving a wide range of problems from a field of knowledge [8, pag.67]. Thus, the understanding of the learning task must be a priority for the child during the learning process. From this perspective, learning importance consists in child's inner tenacious position towards learning, child's accommodation to learning process, to his personal experience.

We should mention the fact that understanding the learning task by the child is determined by peculiarities of the role-playing game which, in fact, represents the basic activity at the age of 5-7. From this viewpoint, V. Muhina is characterizing the role-playing game "as a school of social relations, within which forms of social behavior are constantly built and strengthened". Through play children learn to communicate, cooperate, set tasks to oneself, identify actions of accomplishment, learn how to be aware of the observance of certain rules, etc. In other words, through play certain premises are created for the development of psychic processes, which impel the creation in children of the necessary qualities for the learning activity in school [9, pag.58-64].

We should also point out the fact that through role-playing games the child starts to look about the procedure of obtaining the result, not only the result itself. Concurrently, child's capacity of looking about the result is in correlation with the awareness of the learning task and conditions of its accomplishment. Thus, the anticipation of actions' result and self-control are the key to activity's success or unsuccess.

The first self-control elements can be developed at a high pre-school age. There is an interdependence between child's action and words, between adult's actions and instructions. Self-control represents a basis for developing children's focus and attention towards the working process, produces essential changes in action procedures. From this perspective, the creation of the self-control skill represents one of the most important factors which influences changes occurred in child's conscience and behavior under the training influence, ensures the development of independence and eliminates mechanical imitations. Thus, self-control impels the quality increase of child's activity, such as the ability of analyzing his own actions, of consciously changing them, reorganizing them according to the obtained result. In this sense, the author in his day-to-day life, while exploring various learning actions, is asserting that children aged 6-7 can not only notice the discrepancy between the obtained result and the planned one, but also can successfully operate certain necessary remedies in their own

actions, although children's control actions in this period of time are still diffuse. As result, pedagogue's task is to take into account this peculiarity, creating self-control actions in children.

The creation of self-control actions supposes the observance of certain conditions: a concise formulation of requirements towards the child; focusing child's attention on result-obtaining procedures; setting the correlation between action procedures and the obtained result; while instructing and planning the working operations, the child must be oriented towards self-control actions; awareness of control necessity not only at the end of activity, but also during its performance.

At the age of 6-7, the possibility of child's intellectual activity is significantly increasing (N. Poddiakov, U. Schiopu, A. Bolboceanu, etc.). The development of thinking operations through practical actions ensures the direct interiorization of such actions, impelling the transition from the preparatory thinking to the concrete – intuitive operatory thinking. Gradually, certain elements of causal thinking are developing and knowledge activity is deepening. Simple logical thinking elements appear, oriented towards the systematization and generalization of phenomena and events, the capacity of operating with generalizing, schematic images. Nevertheless, psychic neoformations from this period of time are distinguished by an insufficient development, fact which proves that these processes are developing and do not fully fulfill their regulatory function in child's independent activity. Their manifestation is possible in collaboration with the pedagogue. Concurrently, at the age of 6-7 a new formation is creating at a new level of activity regulation. We speak about the conscious organization of the activity on the basis of a structured plan. As result, these psychological characteristics of children influence their psychological readiness for school [4, pag.78].

Children's psychological readiness for school is also including the *development of the motivational sphere* of child's personality, of the appearance of social reasons and their subordination. These reasons, as S. Rubenstein states, represent "building material" for "building" child's character. These reasons accomplish a double function: first of all, they encourage and lead child's activities, second of all they give a subjective character to the activity. Thus, the essence of the activity, including the one of learning in school, is determined by its reasons [11, pag.89-90]. Learning cannot take place in the absence of certain important availabilities of the functionality of the information process, such as *reasons*. This fact had been attested by several researchers, such as: A. Lazar, F. Turcu, D. Elkonin, S. Rubenstein, etc.

In authors' opinion, F. Turcu and A. Turcu, *motivation* is a condition for learning activity and in the same time is its product, expressed through interests and attitudes [3, pag.96]. In the same time, motivation, in the opinion of the researcher A. Lazar, is placed between the learning task and its achievement, thus becoming an intermediary variable acting for school progress [2, pag.8].

As result, being a psychological mechanism, motivation is the fundamental vector of child's personality, which, during learning activity, is orienting his behavior towards the achievement of objectives. Obviously, motivation ensures the interior organization of child's behavior, stimulates his learning activity, contributing to task awareness and execution.

The appearance of learning reasons represents a complex behavioral field, being determined by many factors. It is not characterized by a positive increase of the interest in learning, but first of all – by the complexity of the structure of the motivational sphere of child's personality. In this sense, we distinguish two levels of cognitive reasons: *learning reasons* oriented towards the learning process, its content and result (manifested through the will of going to school, the efforts applied for overcoming difficulties, general curiosity) and *epistemological reasons*, oriented towards information-obtaining procedures.

Thus, D. Uznadze believes that the main reason of the learning activity consists in the necessity of performance of child's intellectual forces. The criteria of children's preparing for school, as the author perceived, must be structured in relation to the level of development of their cognitive necessities [12, pag.48-50].

Other psychologists (L. Bojovich, D. Elkonin) emphasize the importance of social reasons for learning, which create premises for the further development of the young schoolchild position and determine the personal readiness of the child for school learning [8, pag.38-39].

Nevertheless, scholar psychologists state that one of the main conditions for the development of learning motivation consists in the creation of children's learning activity and in setting the interaction between its components. This fact had been attested by V. Davíðov, who stated that the efficient creation of learning motivation can take place during the gradual knowledge gathering process, according to the principle of evolution from abstract to concrete [6, 3-18].

Communication is also a structural component of child's psychological preparing for school. In this sense, at a high pre-school age certain changes occur in the communication sphere, such as the appearance of a new type of communication, which efficiently contributes to child's learning in school. As result, children who haven't been prepared for school encounter difficulties in the adaptation to the learning activity. Children perceive with difficulty the context of learning situations, fact which causes the misunderstanding of the learning task and of the conditions of its execution. As result, this category of children, in relations with the teacher, remain at the level of personal situational communication, being classified under the level of voluntary contextual communication.

### 3. Results

Based on content analysis of psychological preparation for the school we have identified indicators that correspond to the specific activity of the child's learning in school.

**Table 1. Indicators of psychological preparation of children for school**

Components	Indicators
Intellectual preparation	1. Has a knowledge about the system environment. 2. Possess knowledge processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ability to listen, ask questions, respond to questions, to experiment, to use charts, models etc.</li> </ul> 3. Sufficient level of development of cognitive interest. 4. A certain level of development of cognitive processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sufficient level of development of perception</li> <li>• developing thinking operations (analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalization, writing, classification);</li> <li>• the level development of intuitive-concrete thinking..</li> </ul> 5. The development of fluent speech (monologue, dialogue, phonemic hearing).
Volitional preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manifestation of a voluntary behavior;</li> <li>• The acceptance of a goal in the motivation game;</li> <li>• The acceptance of some elements of instruction;</li> <li>• Start a topic and an activity plan, fragmented self control, with the help of an adult;</li> <li>• Establishing the link between purpose and action processes.</li> </ul>
Self control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevails situational self control;</li> <li>• Appreciate adequate success reasons / failures of his learning process;</li> <li>• Realize the qualities of a good pupil;</li> <li>• Show interest towards adult appreciation.</li> </ul>
Communicative preparing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tendency to act based on the rules;</li> <li>• Mutual stable, selective relations;</li> <li>• Coordinates activities with those of colleagues in common activities.</li> </ul>
Motivational preparing	1. Cognitive motivation: the need for the cognitive interests and gain new knowledge, skills and abilities;; 2. Social motivation: the need to communicate with adults in a

	new level, to occupy a new social position; 3. Ready to occupy a "position of school inner" child's attitude towards the natural environment, resulting from the combination of social and cognitive reasons;
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#### 4. Conclusions

Psychological availability for school is a result of the child's development throughout the preschool. It helps develop the child as a subject of learning activity to the grounds of this activity, system action and purpose. The concordance between psychological status of the child and school requirements is an indicator of its adaptive learning activity. Psychological preparation of the child for the school interacts with the cognitive development of the student, whose components constitute the premises for its formation.

The ascendant evolution of the development of the integral child's personality, the attempt to match the educational process with the requirements of the contemporaneous life went exceeded the matter of modernization of child's psychological preparing for school, which raises not only to the level of a central issue of the educator and teacher, but also to the level of scholars interested in this matter.

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