Theoretical and Practical Aspects of Valeology – the Constituents of the System of Preschool Education

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Abstract: Purpose: A person's health is of great value. The study aims to analyse the expediency of implementing the system of physical training and health improving means and their effectiveness in the development of health maintaining competence of preschool children.

Material: A sample of educators and preschool children from the educational institutions of Lviv (Ukraine) participated in the study. We used such methods of data collection as: the regulatory and legal documents analysis method, the observation method, the survey by questionnaire 'Is your child a healthy one?' method.

Results: The ability of preschool children to treat their own health consciously will guarantee the effectiveness of their health maintaining competence development.

Conclusions: The system of measures aimed at developing preschool children health maintaining competence will be effective, provided that their consciousness has been developed.

Keywords: *valeology, health, health maintaining competence, pre-schoolers, preschool education.*

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Introduction

Health is an invaluable asset of a person, an important condition for a full and happy life. Health helps to solve successfully the main tasks of life: to study, to work, to communicate, to make friends, to start a family, to raise children, to carry out their plans, to overcome difficulties, and if necessary, significant overload (Importance of Education, 2020).

Theoretical analysis of philosophical, psychological and pedagogical scientific works (Zaitsev et al., 2011), (Kononko, 2003), (Ruslanov et al., 2011), (Chagovets, 2006) on the problem of forming a healthy lifestyle in the system of education has showed that nowadays this problem is relevant, though insufficiently developed in practical terms.

A person's health is the guarantee of his/her active lifestyle, self-realization, or development of personal creative potential. That is why the formation, maintenance, strengthening and recovery of the younger generation's health, the protection of their vital activity – is one of the major tasks of a state. First of all, it is actualized at the level of preschool education, because the negative ecological state of the environment, the insufficient effectiveness of the system of public health care, and the decline in living standards of most families provoke deterioration of children's state of health from the very birth. The preschool age is an important period, when personality is formed, and the basic experience of safe vital activity and healthy lifestyle is gained. Preschool children, due to their physiological peculiarities, cannot determine the level of danger by themselves that is why the adults have the mission of their protection. Children should be taught how to avoid injuries, how to use household utensils in a proper way, or to behave themselves in public places, at home, towards nature, in order to recognize various dangers.

Everything mentioned above is the research subject of valeology – a science about health.

Regulatory documents point out that the state takes care of maintaining and strengthening children's health, of their psychological and physical development (Article 3) (the Law of Ukraine on Preschool Education). They also emphasize the necessity of developing health maintaining competence that includes the awareness of the body constitution, hygienic skills of looking after the body, belonging to a particular sex, food products, basic features of personal health, the value of health for a person; the ability to perform basic movements and physical exercises, to use the acquired knowledge and skills of maintaining health

without damaging personal and other people's health; keeping to the rules of safety of vital activity (Bohush, 2012).

Of great urgency is the need for creating safe conditions for children's vital activity, organizing the educational process in an effective way, searching for the optimal means of carrying out the tasks of protecting children's lives. Accordingly, there are the following basic directions of work: preventive healthcare work; integrating the tasks of valeological education and the safety of vital activity into the pedagogical process; with the assistance of a family developing the integrity of a personality's health at the preschool age (Lokhvyts'ka, 2014, p. 9).

Recent research of Evangeline Smaree Manassakis on 'Children's participation in the organization of a kindergarten classroom' (Manassakis, 2020) indicates that teachers have the predominant role in organizing early childhood classrooms. Though we consider it to be important to negotiate at least some details with the children.

The of a pre-schooler's health and physical development are as it follows: a pre-schooler is aware of the value of health, its importance for everyday vital activity; he/she has elementary knowledge about the basic factors behind health maintaining; understands the importance of body tempering, by everyday morning exercises, swimming, massage, physiotherapy, proper nutrition, safe behaviour and personal hygiene for health strengthening and disease prevention; follows the rules of health maintaining behaviour; takes part in health and physical training activities; takes a positive attitude to the national and family health traditions; knows about the influence of basic environmental factors on health; possesses the basic skills of body tempering procedures, shows interest in body tempering (Bohush, 2012).

Hypothesis: A necessary condition for maintaining and strengthening of all the constituents of health, the opportune and full development of physical, social, moral, intellectual, cognitive, emotional, creative and other spheres of a child's personality is the implementation of scientifically proved, experimentally approved innovative health maintaining and health developing educational methodologies and technologies into the educational process of preschool educational institutions.

Purpose: The objective of the current study is to discover the interdependence of the level of development of pre-schoolers' conscious attitude to their own health and the created conditions for the organization of the physical training and health improving process at a preschool educational institution with the purpose of developing preschool children's health maintaining competence.

Research methodology.

The methodology of our scientific research is interpreted as a phenomenon and as a scientific category. As a scientific category, research methodology is a set of knowledge about research technology as a phenomenon. Instead, research methodology, as a phenomenon, is a structured technology of research activities (Mishchenko et al., 2017, p.90).

The technology of the study involves compliance with the following successive stages:

- the first stage - awareness and delineation of the subject static elements of the content of the study (in our study - the choice of respondents and the development of questionnaires);
- the second stage - selection of functional analogues of the research content (subfunctions of the research function - additional, clarifying comments to the questionnaire; clarifying questions for individual interviews with respondents);
- the third stage - the selection and use of methods for research (thoroughly described in the next subsection of our study).

Materials and methods

Pupils and employees of those preschool institutions with which cooperation agreements were signed took part in the research. Agreements are concluded on equal levels: University - preschool institution; department - preschool institution; Department of Education - preschool institution; and provide for the implementation of various types of research within the study of students of academic disciplines and their practical classes, as well as the implementation of teachers' achievements within the scientific topics of individual research.

Participants: The study was carried out in a preschool educational institution situated in Lviv (Ukraine). We conducted our study with a sample of 313 physically fit pre-schoolers of ages from 4 to 6 (the ratio of girls to boys is of no importance to our study) and 25 preschool educators. The data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

Respondents' age	Number	Pedagogical work experience
4 – 5 years of age	126	10 – 15 years 15 – 25 years
5 – 6 years of age	187	
25 – 35 years of age	15	
35 – 45 years of age	10	

Source: own research

With the purpose of searching for new approaches to the physical training and health improving work with children, stimulating the pedagogical potential of preschool educators and parents concerning the matters of children's health improving, developing their skills of healthy living, a preschool practical psychologist worked out a questionnaire 'Is your child a healthy one?' including points such as: a child's suffering mood swings and hysterics, his/her falling asleep and sound sleeping, appetite, illnesses and chronic diseases, a mother's delivery traumas and problems. The results of the survey were discussed at the parent meeting 'We are responsible for our children's health' during which parents told about their own experience in educating children and engaging them in physical training and sports activities. The obtained results prompted us to choose the methods that might help to determine the level of development of preschoolers' conscious attitude to their own health.

N. Denysenko points out that only if a pre-schooler's conscious attitude to his/her own health is developed, a child will understand such concepts as:

'I am a physically fit child', which means that my body, my head, my torso, my limbs, all the organs and physiological systems operate in coordination with each other and feel good.

'I am a mentally healthy child', which means that my emotional and intellectual needs for communication and main types of activity (playing games, studying, working) are satisfied in the process of interaction with the environment.

'I am a spiritually healthy child', which means that I understand my connection with nature and society; my natural talents, gifts and abilities are being developed in an evolutionary way; a happy conception of the world is being formed.

'I am a socially healthy child', which means that I constantly communicate with my relatives, with elder people and people of higher social status, with the children of the same age and those younger than me in a balanced way.

In the process of education children acquire knowledge and skills, certain behaviour patterns through consciousness (feelings, emotions, thinking, volition, self-consciousness). In connection to this we can state that in order to develop pre-schoolers' conscious attitude to their own health one should teach them what health is. The knowledge about health, a child's life and emotional experience of maintaining, strengthening and recovering health will favour the development of his/her life competence in sub-

spheres ‘Me-physical’, ‘Me-mental’, ‘Me-social’, ‘Me-spiritual’ (Denysenko, 2008, p.4).

We studied the determined indices of conscious attitude development with the help of modified methods of L. Bozhovych (methods of diagnosing the conscious motives for motion activity) and T. Ehlers (methods of studying motivation for success) (Kominko, 2006). The obtained data are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The level of conscious attitude to health development

Index	High level		Sufficient level		Average level		Low level	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Me-physical	219	70,5	21	7,3	70	21,5	3	0,75
Me-mental	237	75,5	13	4,2	61	19,5	2	0,8
Me-social	127	43	74	34,5	80	23,6	32	9
Me-spiritual	70	21,5	75	24	107	34,2	61	19,5

Source: own research

While studying the motives of duty and responsibility for motion activity according to the methods of L. Bozhovych (Kominko, 2006)., the respondents expressed their own judgments. For statements as ‘I understand that everybody should go in for sports regularly’, ‘I try to follow the adult’s instructions quickly and precisely’, ‘I understand my responsibility for the physical fitness’, the pre-schoolers demonstrated the following levels of motivation: 70,5% – high, 7,3 % – sufficient, 21,5 % – average, 0,75 % – low. We used the given criteria to evaluate the index of ‘Me-physical’. The judgments ‘I understand that I need excellent health’, ‘I understand that my physical health depends on systematic physical training’ are aimed at determining the index of ‘Me-mental’ which, in our study, is important within the context of self-determination and self-perfection of a pre-schoolers’ personality. The respondents showed the following results: 75,5 % – high level, 4,2 % – sufficient level, 19,5 % – average level, 0,8 % – low level.

We consider it important to emphasize the results of the index ‘Me-mental’ development. The pre-schoolers’ motives aimed at well-being, that is careful treatment of personal and other people’s health, are determined on

the basis of such judgments as 'I understand that other people's health depends on my behaviour', 'I want to receive praise from an adult for carrying out the tasks', 'I want to be respected for the high level of my physical qualities development'. The obtained data prove that the concept of physical health is one of the respondents' personal values that determine the meaning of 'Me-spiritual'.

The science of valeology presupposes the process of variable learning. The time when children are of preschool age is perfect for absorbing by themselves new useful habits which will be constant in the future. Valeology helps to develop the skills of individual hygiene, for instance. It is outlined, in the article which analyses the so-called Handwashing programme, that effectiveness is high. Furthermore, the well thought process will correspond to a healthy nutrition. Otherwise, there will be a lot of health problems caused by unhealthy food and culture of eating. (*Nutrition related health problems in preschool children*, 2006).

The fact that visual perception plays the essential role in the process of learning is widely known. Though, it may often be forgotten that the mentioned fact can be used while teaching the fundamentals of the valeology for kids. A vivid example was provided in the article which shows the visual perception of snack packages among preschool children/ (Nelson, Duff, & Ahn, 2015)

Physical health as one of the spheres of valeology is characterized by providing optimal conditions for the growth and development of a child's organs and organism systems. Somatic health is determined through constant medical control over the condition of a child's organs and organism systems and their correction with the help of natural means (Lokhvytska, 2014, p.10).

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, signed by 195 states, including Ukraine, children have universal and inalienable rights, including the right to education, which should be aimed at the development of the child's personality, talents, mental and physical abilities to the fullest (Articles 28 and 29) and to obtain information (Article 13) (*Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 1989).

The major tasks of the educational branch 'A child's personality' are the following: to create favourable conditions for the development and education of a child at a preschool educational institution (a favourable environment in which mental processes are not hampered, children grow up at the most acceptable and suitable for their nature rate, there are no stressful situations and the requirements for children are adequate); to evaluate the curative influence (result) of physical training classes regularly, that is to gain constant medical and pedagogical control; to develop

children's strong interest in various types of motion activity in order to achieve positive results in maintaining their health; to use effective prophylactic innovative health improving technologies: elements of rhythmic gymnastics, finger gymnastics, breathing gymnastics, sound gymnastics, water aerobics, mental gymnastics, fit ball gymnastics; to engage children in health improving technologies of a therapeutic character (art therapy, sand play therapy, fairy-tale therapy, laughter therapy, music therapy, colour therapy, play therapy) (the Core components of preschool education, 2012).

It is of great importance to provide to the child the opportunity to spend time outside, being able to move, to develop stamina. The outdoor environment should promote social participation as well as gender equality and inclusion, and consequently it should be designed to offer both access to a natural environment and multiple opportunities for play. (Nekane, Larrea, Muela, & Barandiaran, 2017).

Social-emotional learning is increasingly becoming an area of focus for determining and predicting the success of children. It has been proved that later on it leads to positive results in the academic learning of the child during his/her further steps/stage in school. (Denham & Chavaughn, 2010).

Within the context of the tasks of the given study, we conducted a survey among preschool educators, aiming at determining the frequency and effectiveness of using physical education methods in their practical work. According to the results of the survey, the respondents determined such main methods of physical education as *the evolutionary method, the method of relaxation priority, the method of circular structuring of classes, the method of individual differentiation of physical training load, the total play method, the method of object manipulation activity, the method of maximal sensor enrichment, the method of generating the archetypal energy of the subconscious*. The survey data are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. The survey data

The name of the method	The number of respondents, %	
<i>the evolutionary method</i>	12	48
<i>the method of relaxation priority</i>	15	60
<i>the method of circular structuring of classes</i>	22	88
<i>the method of individual differentiation of physical training load</i>	25	100
<i>the total play method</i>	25	100
<i>the method of object manipulation activity</i>	13	52
<i>the method of maximal sensor enrichment</i>	18	72
<i>the method of generating the archetypal energy of the subconscious</i>	8	32

Source: own research

The evolutionary method implements the widely known principle of accordance with nature. It is based on the evolutionary sequence of children's acquisition of the basic motion modes: swimming (if there is a swimming pool) – lying – crawling – sitting – standing – walking – climbing – jumping. The given sequence is the most optimal one as it has won selection in the process of evolution of the animal world and the human beings. This method is of especial importance at an early age when a child's skeleton is gradually becoming vertical and the gravitational load on the spine is increasing. Such an approach is considered innovative in comparison with the traditional structure of physical education classes.

The method of relaxation priority (relaxation, meditation, energy release) presupposes that at the beginning of the class (or any other form of physical education teaching) it is necessary for children to enter a state of general psychophysical relaxation that will help life energy to move fluently around the body and provide motion and play activity. Special attention should be paid to the problematic tense muscles while performing vibrating, wavy movements (vibration, shaking off, a combination of vibration with shaking off) and slow stretching.

The method of circular structuring of classes gives an opportunity to conduct every physical education class following the model of «evolution in miniature», repeating the stages of development of the animal world and the human being. Every next class should repeat this so called 'evolutionary clip', but at a higher and more complicated level from the point of view of methodology/from a methodological point of view.

The method of individual differentiation of physical training load presupposes the division of age groups into typological subgroups depending on the signs of individual differentiation of physical training load which prevail, and further individualization of educational activity. First of all, it concerns the peculiarities of children's movement impairments. According to this, children of the same age group should be divided into subgroups depending on the spine curvature disorders, foot disorders, the level of physical development or some of its indices etc.

The total play method presupposes the use of games from the very beginning of the class to its end as far as games represent the major type of pre-schoolers' activity. All the physical education classes should be conducted in the form of games. Children are supposed to role-play various fairy-tale characters. Under such conditions it is possible to generate maximal motivation for movement and play activity. An educator following the total play method should make up big thematic games, situational mini-games and also concrete exercise games. At each physical education class,

the physical environment of the classroom should be turned into the play area and then be filled with the atmosphere of playing.

The method of object manipulation activity gives an opportunity to implement a great variety of a child's object manipulation acts into the practice of physical education. First of all, it concerns those acts that involve both hands and positively stimulate the formation of certain brain structures, as well as provide modern effective speech development and the generation of higher psychic functions.

The method of maximal sensor enrichment presupposes the necessity of a complex influence on particular brain structures of a child with the help of afferent impulses. In such a way, in the process of performing physical exercises, proprioceptive drifts from muscles and joints should be additionally enriched with other sensor drifts: vestibular, gravitational, visual, hearing, temperature ones etc.

The method of generating the archetypal energy of the subconscious gives an opportunity to use the great energy potential of the collective subconscious (unconscious) at the physical education classes due to the creation of archetypal role-play images. This presupposes the use of fairy-tale images, characters and situations typical of pre-schoolers that will call up appropriate associations and provide the child with the energy needed for the performance of effective role-play movement acts (Yefymenko, 2014).

It is important that the above-mentioned methods should be organically integrated into the educational process of a particular age group as well as the whole preschool educational institution. Also, they should be applied in a complex way through the creation of the safe developing material, natural and social environment, ecologically favourable living conditions, the well-balanced medical care and nutrition, the optimization of movement activity, the systemic approach to the development of children's attitude to their own health as being of great value and their motivation for a healthy living. An important condition is maintaining harmonious, friendly relationships among all the participants of the educational process: educators, children and their parents with the child being the centre of all the educational influences, regarding the organization of physical culture and health work in preschool educational institutions (Letter of the Ministry of Education and Science № 1 / 9-456 dated 02.09.2016).

Results of the research

A child's opportune and organized in accordance with the natural regularities' movement activity lays the foundation for its further effective

development in other spheres of educational activity. Most of pre-schoolers have various types of physical and psychic development deviations and this makes the problem of children's physical development and health improving a matter of state policy in the sphere of education. Only a healthy child can realize all his/her personality potential while studying, working and participating in social activities. Such understanding of the problem of physical education makes educators realize the importance of developing the younger generation's need to follow a healthy way of living, be positive about it and interested in physical education, popularize it among children and adults. That is why we focus our attention on searching for new approaches to the organization of physical training and health improving process at a preschool educational institution that would directly correspond to the contemporary understanding of the above-mentioned problems and their solutions.

For this purpose, the physical education curriculum 'Fairy-tale physical education' has been designed for preschool children. The curriculum is based on an innovative approach to the physical education of pre-schoolers that involves taking into consideration natural and biological regulations of a human being's body functioning. The evolutionary (ontogenetic) approach to the physical development of a child is the most rational one that favours the development of mental processes, and will give the adult an opportunity to socialize into the environment and the society in the future (Yefymenko, 2014, p. 4). We believe that the organization of physical education of children of early and preschool age on the basis of fairy tales will be an interesting element of learning in different countries.

The analysis of work organization let us state that during the physical training and health improving work, the following problems are solved: health care and health strengthening; the improvement of a child's body functions; full physical development; the prevention of catarrhal and infectious diseases; the improvement of every pre-schoolers' health; the development of the main physical qualities of a child's organism, his/her movement skills, health improving skills, safe vital activity skills; laying the foundation for a child's positive self-acceptance that provides for a favourable personal development in general.

The study made it possible to identify a number of problems that arise in the organization of physical culture and health work, in particular:

- lack of specially equipped premises for physical culture and health activities;
- lack of proper technical equipment for events;
- lack of specially trained specialists;

- low activity of parents in holding joint events.

The observation of the work at the preschool educational institution shows that there has been created an effective system adapted to the needs and conditions of working and aimed at maintaining children's health and their physical development, organizing children's diverse activity during the day, taking into account their needs and preferences that depend upon the season, children's age and their health condition.

We suggest the analysis of a valeological model of a day at a particular preschool educational institution. During the week, at the preschool educational institution, classes are held in a gym, and when the weather conditions are favourable, they are held outdoors (traditional or non-traditional). The structure of classes and the quantity of movement and exercises correspond with the children's age. The educators use an individual and differential approach to quantify the physical loading according to the children's health condition indices and the level of their physical development. It should be pointed out that in many preschool educational institutions there are no physical training instructors.

It is the lack of a specialist / instructor in physical education of preschool children that creates significant problems for the organization of systematic work on the formation of the foundations of valeological literacy.

At the preschool educational institution there is a tourism and local history circle 'For health with a rucksack' that popularizes children tourism. Such form of organizing preschool children's leisure time is an exam in endurance, mutual support and friendly relationships. At the same time, tourism helps to make children healthier, improve their movement skills in natural conditions and prevent physical inactivity, stimulates them to lead a healthy life, distracts them from the negative influences of the environment, contributes to the rational use of free time.

While selecting various forms of work it is necessary to take into consideration the experience of parents, the financial conditions of a family, the number of children in a family, the domineering role of a father or a mother etc. The preschool educators need to build relationship with the parents based on frankness, mutual understanding and humanity. A healthy atmosphere and the actions coordinated with parents help to carry out the most important task of laying the foundation for healthy living.

According to the Instruction, the authorities of the preschool educational institution have worked out a number of measures to prevent traumas and injuries at the physical education classes and during the whole educational process. They also have planned some methodical work with the teaching staff, work with the parents and work with the children aimed at

increasing the level of pre-schoolers' awareness of the basics of the safety of vital activity.

Conclusion

Bringing up a healthy child suggests his/her psychic and emotional health, that is why it is necessary to provide the emotional well-being and psychological comfort of pre-schoolers. It is important to create the necessary conditions for providing all the age groups with psychological comfort. The learning environment should give a child an opportunity to move freely and choose the desired type of activity. To develop a children's positive attitude and self-assessment educators should use various methods: praise, encouragement, positive pedagogical evaluation, compassion, praising in advance. The results of the study confirmed the hypothesis that there should be used psycho-gymnastic exercises that teach pre-schoolers to establish emotional contacts with the peers, to come to an agreement and overcome psychological barriers.

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