

GAME AS A LEADING ACTIVITY OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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Abstract

Play is considered one of the most important activities in early childhood development. It plays a fundamental role in shaping children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical abilities. In preschool education, play serves not only as entertainment but also as an effective educational tool that supports children's overall development. Through play, children learn to communicate, solve problems, explore their environment, and develop creativity. The purpose of this article is to analyze the role of play as a leading activity in preschool-aged children and to examine its importance in the educational process. The study also discusses different types of play and their influence on children's psychological and social development.

Keywords: preschool education, play activity, child development, learning through play, early childhood education, cognitive development.

Introduction

Early childhood is one of the most critical stages in human development. During this period, children actively explore the world around them and acquire essential skills that influence their future learning and behavior. Preschool education aims to support children's development by providing a safe and stimulating environment where they can learn through various activities. One of the most effective ways of learning in early childhood is play. Play is a natural form of activity for children, allowing them to express their thoughts, emotions, and imagination. Unlike formal instruction, play-based learning encourages children to participate actively in the learning process. Educational psychologists emphasize that play is not only a form of entertainment but also a powerful developmental tool. Through play, children develop problem-solving abilities, creativity, communication skills, and social

interaction. Therefore, play is widely recognized as the leading activity for preschool children.

The Concept of Play in Preschool Education

Play is a voluntary and enjoyable activity that children engage in naturally. It allows children to explore their surroundings, experiment with different roles, and develop their imagination. In preschool education, play is considered a central component of the learning process. Educational researchers highlight that play helps children develop both intellectual and emotional abilities. For example, role-playing games allow children to imitate adult behavior and understand social relationships. Construction games help develop logical thinking and spatial awareness, while creative games encourage imagination and artistic expression. Play also helps children develop independence and self-confidence. When children participate in play activities, they make decisions, solve problems, and interact with their peers.

Types of Play in Preschool Children

Role-playing games are one of the most common forms of play in preschool education. In such games, children imitate real-life situations such as family life, school activities, or professional roles. These games help children understand social relationships and develop communication skills. Constructive play involves building or creating objects using materials such as blocks, puzzles, or construction sets. This type of play helps develop logical thinking, problem-solving skills, and creativity. Physical play includes activities such as running, jumping, climbing, and other forms of movement. Physical play is essential for children's physical development and helps improve coordination and motor skills. Creative play encourages children to express themselves through drawing, music, storytelling, and other artistic activities.

The Role of Play in Children's Development

Play has a significant impact on various aspects of children's development. It supports cognitive development by helping children observe, analyze, and solve problems. It enhances social development because children learn to cooperate, share,

negotiate, and resolve conflicts. Play also contributes to emotional development by allowing children to express their feelings and understand emotions. Active play supports physical development by improving strength, coordination, and overall health. Thus, play supports children's intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth.

The Role of Educators in Organizing Play Activities

Educators play a crucial role in organizing and supporting play activities in preschool institutions. Teachers should provide various materials and resources that encourage creativity and exploration such as educational toys, construction sets, and art materials. Educators should observe children's play to understand their interests and developmental needs. Based on these observations, teachers can guide play activities in ways that promote learning and development. Group play activities help children develop teamwork, communication, and social interaction skills.

Conclusion

Play is a fundamental activity in early childhood and plays a central role in the development of preschool children. Through play, children develop cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills that are essential for their future learning and success. Preschool education should emphasize play-based learning as an effective and natural method of teaching young children. By integrating play into educational practice, educators can support children's holistic development.

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