The Psychology of Preschool Children

A. V. Zaporozhets and D. B. Elkonin 1971

Among Soviet psychologists and educators this book is the standard reference on research in early child development. It is widely used as a text in intermediate courses in development psychology in universities and pedagogical institutes throughout the Soviet Union and East European countries. Urie Bronfenbrenner, Professor of Psychology and of Human Development and Family Studies at Cornell University, remarks that the book provides a double service: it gives Western psychologists access to the extensive work done in the Soviet Union, using an approach substantially different from our own, and it brings Soviet study into the perspective of Western theories of development – on which it comments extensively.

These studies of the perceptual processes of children from birth to age seven cover a number of important developments: sensation and perception, attention, memory, speech, thinking, imagination, movement, and formation of motor habits. The theoretical ideas that guide the experiments are those of L. S. Vygotsky and his former colleagues and students – now leading psychologists in the U.S.S.R. – Leontiev, Luria, Zaporozhets, and Elkonin. In discerning motivational causes, the Soviet approach differs sharply from that of Western European and American psychologists, who assert that either psychological development is the result of the realization or maturing of inborn abilities, or it moves along a path of adaptation to the surrounding environment. “The fact is,” note the editors, “that cognitive processes do not form and develop by themselves, but as individual exploratory acts comprising an indispensable organic part of an integral activity of the child... and fulfilling in it orienting and regulating functions.”

Theories rooted in the dialectic materialism of Marx and Engels assert that the child's physical and psychic development is shaped by his interaction with society. In this man-mediated environment, language becomes the principal means of interaction between child and adult, and preschool training is crucially important as the child begins to structure his own behavior. Experiments devised to focus the child's attention on differentiated aspects of his environment often succeed in enhancing his competence in diverse areas such as auditory discrimination, visual perception, language usage, thought processes, and imaginative play. The complex processes of mastering social experience require his participation in certain activities at each stage of development: for an infant, the manipulation of objects; for a preschool child, games; and for a school-age child, learning combined with various types of mutually useful tasks.
Throughout, authors of these studies examine the work of Piaget, Isaacs, Russell, Bühler, Lashley, the “Gestalt” psychologists, and others – criticizing in particular Piaget's failure to recognize the social basis for what he terms “egocentric speech.”

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In general, for children of senior preschool age are characterized by sociability and the need for friendship. Noticeably the predominance in the kindergarten group of communicating with peers of the same sex, acceptance in the environment of which is essential for self-assertion and adequate self-esteem. 6-year-olds already have an understanding that, in addition to good, kind and sympathetic parents, there are also bad parents. Bad - this is not only unfairly related to the child, but also those who quarrel and can not find agreement among themselves. Reflection we find in typical for the ag Insight into psychological and pedagogical aspects of developing positive socialization of preschool-aged children and into social pedagogics foundations is provided. Different types of socialization are considered. Different component elements of complex support as a modern technique are described. The importance of childâ€™s subjective attitude, the necessity to create conditions for self-fulfillment, self-actualization, for personal needs, interests and desires demonstration are highlighted. In domestic psychology of the 20-30s of the 20th century, the problem of sex-role development was intensively studied by Ye.A. Arkin, M.M. Rubinstein, N.A. Rybkin etc. However, for a long time since, there hardly have been any investigations in this area. Child Psychology Although parents and students of human development have been observing children for millennia, researchers in America and Europe [1] began to conduct systematic studies of childhood behavior around the turn of the twentieth century. Child Psychology Although parents and students of human development have been observing children for millennia, researchers in America and Europe began to conduct systematic studies of childhood behavior around the turn of the twentieth century. Prior attempts to codify normal development had been published as diaries that described the behavior of a single child, usually the son or daughter of the author.