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## Physical education of children in pre-primary education in Ukraine (pedagogical aspect)

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### Wychowanie fizyczne dzieci w edukacji przedszkolnej na Ukrainie (aspekt pedagogiczny)

#### Streszczenie

Artykuł poświęcony jest problematyce wychowania fizycznego w edukacji przedszkolnej na Ukrainie. Organizacja procesu wychowania fizycznego w przedszkolach w tym kraju odbywa się zgodnie z rozporządzeniem Ministerstwa Oświaty i Nauki Ukrainy „O edukacji przedszkolnej”, państwowymi programami oświatowo-wychowawczymi „Dziecko”, „Ukraińskie przedszkole”, „Ziarenko”, „Maluch”, „Dziecko w wieku przedszkolnym”, „Ja w świecie”. W wychowaniu fizycznym przedszkolaków na Ukrainie ważne miejsce zajmują gry i zabawy ruchowe, gimnastyka poranna, Dni Zdrowia, Święto Sportu, wycieczki piesze. Głównymi zadaniami wychowania fizycznego na Ukrainie w systemie placówek przedszkolnych są: wzmocnienie zdrowia dzieci; sprzyjanie harmonijnemu rozwojowi organizmu; rozwój cech motorycznych; hartowanie ciała; kształtowanie nawyków higienicznych; wzrost motywacji i potrzeby do uprawiania ćwiczeń fizycznych w następnych etapach rozwoju. W ostatnich latach w działalności przedszkoli ukraińskich widoczny jest wzrost zainteresowania wykorzystania na zajęciach z wychowania fizycznego zasobów ludowej kultury fizycznej. W przedszkolu zostało wprowadzone stanowisko nauczyciela wychowania fizycznego. Do podstawowych form organizacyjnych prowadzenia zajęć z wychowania fizycznego w przedszkolach Ukrainy zaliczane są: forma frontalna, zajęcia w zespołach, zajęcia dodatkowe.

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Ważnym elementem efektywności wychowania fizycznego dzieci i w wieku przedszkolnym na Ukrainie jest integracja form wychowania fizycznego z muzyką i tańcem.

**Słowa kluczowe:** wychowanie fizyczne, dzieci, przedszkole, zdrowie, gry i zabawy ruchowe.

## Abstract

This article is devoted to the issues of physical education in preschool education in Ukraine. The organisation of physical education process in kindergartens in this country is conducted in accordance with the regulation of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine "On preschool education" and with the state educational programmes "Child", "Ukrainian preschool", "Little Seed", "Toddler", "Pre-school Child", "Me in the World". Physical games, morning gymnastics, Health Days, Sports Days and walking trips play an important role in physical education of preschoolers in Ukraine. The main tasks of physical education in Ukraine in preschool institutions are: strengthening the health of children; fostering the harmonious development of the organism; development of motor skills; body hardening; forming hygiene habits. In the recent years, an increase in the interest in using the resources of folk physical culture in physical education classes has been observed in the activities of Ukrainian preschools. The position of a physical education teacher has been introduced in preschool education institutions. The basic organisational forms of conducting physical education classes in preschools in Ukraine include: frontal form, classes in teams, additional activities. An important element of the effectiveness of physical education of preschool children in Ukraine is the integration of physical education forms with music and dance.

**Keywords:** physical education, children, preschool, health, physical games and plays.

## Introduction

In the works of E. Vilchkovski, N. Denisenko and T. Dmitrienko devoted to the dynamics of physical activity of preschool children, it was established that the physical activity of children in most preschool education institutions is not always at the appropriate level, and the indicators of shortcomings in the physical education of pre-schoolers are increased morbidity among children. The current situation regarding the health of children in Ukraine is not optimistic. In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the number of children aged up to 14 with cardiovascular diseases increased from 14.5% to 28.2%; with diseases of the locomotor system from 31.7% to 67.1%; and obesity from 7.0% to 8.9% [8]. The number of children with sight diseases and posture defects has clearly increased. It is important to study the health problems of preschool children, because, as N.Y. Panhelova and D.L. Kharina emphasise, 75% of adult diseases are a consequence of the health condition in childhood and adolescence [8]. Factors influencing the deterioration of Ukrainian children's health include: insufficient time to rest, negative microclimate in the family, improper sanitary and hygienic conditions at home as well as improper nutrition. Tendencies indicating a decrease in the level of health and physical fitness, mainly of preschool children, have been observed in Ukraine for a long time. 80% of preschoolers suffer from respiratory diseases,

and 50% of them suffer from diseases of the neurological system. A lot of children entering school have serious problems concerning physical preparation and body efficiency. The number of students from special medical groups (students with deviations in the functioning of the organism determining systems) in the early grades is 5–6%, while in the older grades – 30% [3].

Primary school, as pointed out by V. Melekhov and I.P. Masliak, is the first educational stage in the comprehensive and harmonious personality development. Unfortunately, during the transition from preschool to school, there is a significant reduction in the range of children's physical activity (up to 50%). While contemporary Ukrainian school devotes 10 to 12 hours to students' intellectual development every day, it devotes only 2-3 hours a week to physical education [7]. This data is highly disturbing and the educational authorities and Ukrainian scientists are well aware of it, making considerable efforts (especially in the last decade) to change these negative trends, although one will have to wait for the visible results of these changes.

## **Research methods and problems**

The material uses publications of older and new generation of Ukrainian scientists in the fields of physical education of preschool children. Their views and results of their research were presented. The following research methods were used in the article: induction, deduction and synthesis methods. The following research questions were formulated: 1. Which forms of physical activity are currently dominant in the organization of physical education classes in Ukrainian kindergartens? 2. Which tendencies dominate in the organization of physical education classes for preschool children in Ukraine?

## **Discussion**

The issues of the theory and methodology of organisation, content, and conducting physical education classes for preschool children in Ukraine have been dealt with by O.V. Bogińska, A.A. Pyvovara, L.V. Kozibroda, V.V. Polishchuk, O.L. Boginich, O.M. Bondar, O.D. Dubogaj, I.O. Kurok, A.V. Tsos, N.F. Denisenko, N.V. Moskalenko, N.E. Panhelova and E.S. Vilchkovski. The work of O.V. Davidenko focuses on the issue of differential physical education in Ukrainian preschools. The issue of strengthening the emotional state of 6–7 year old children with the help of physical education resources is discussed by V.V. Trochenko, while N. O. Tupchij focuses on the directions of optimizing the physical activity of children with different levels of physical fitness in the older groups of kindergartens. Physical education is also discussed in the works of: G. Vykova

(methodology of teaching basic movements to children), T. Osokinoi (systematics of physical education classes) and T. Dmitrienko (organisation of physical education classes).

In the pre-school period the foundation of a child's health is built, the basic traits of their characters are formed and children learn to take care of their own health. The main task of preschool institutions is to create favourable conditions for the optimal development of a child. In the field of physical education in Ukraine, the following specific tasks are carried out in preschool institutions: strengthening the health of children; favouring the harmonious development of the organism; developing motor skills (strength, endurance, flexibility, speed, etc.); body hardening; forming health habits; developing motivation and need to do physical exercise in the next stages of development. The organisation of the physical education process in preschool is conducted in accordance with the regulation of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine "On preschool education" and with the state educational programmes "Child", "Ukrainian Kindergarten", "Little Seed", "Toddler", "Preschool Child", "Me in the World", and a programme for children of older groups "Convincing Start". The teaching council of a given kindergarten chooses one of the proposed variants of the curriculum.

The "Toddler" programme recognises the care for the children's physical and mental health as the main goal of physical education, and the indicators of the effectiveness of these activities are physical fitness and body's resistance to diseases. The programme prompts teachers to use various forms of physical education such as morning gymnastics, movement games and plays as well as conducting health days and strolls. The "Child" programme in the area of physical education of pre-schoolers lists the following activities: health strengthening, comprehensive psychophysical development of children, body hardening, functions improvement, correcting posture defects, developing motor skills, developing children's need and motivation to continue systematic physical and recreational activity.

In accordance with the regulation of the Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine, the position of a physical education teacher has been introduced in kindergartens. Physical education classes are conducted in all age groups of children and usually in the first half of the day, and the class duration ranges from 15–20 to 30–35 minutes depending on the age of the children. In all age groups, movement games and activities play a very important role and are conducted: in the morning hours (1–3 with low and medium intensity); during walks in the first or second half of the day (during every walk at least three games and plays are planned, with the first game or play taking place 10–15 minutes after the walk has started); in the evening there are 1–2 movement games of medium or low intensity. Morning gymnastics in the younger group lasts 4–6 minutes, in the middle group it lasts 6–8 minutes, and in the older group it lasts 8–10 minutes. The basic conditions for effective morning gymnastics are: free access to fresh air,

appropriate clothes for children adapted to the season and air temperature, exercise pace and instruction.

The duration of classes in the younger group of children is 15–25 minutes (5–6 group lessons per week); in the older age group of pre-schoolers – 12–35 min (7–8 group classes per week). When preparing the timetable, the following factors are taken into account: the level of motor fitness, the principle of rational rotation of the types of children's activity (intellectual and physical) and the proper use of the institution's infrastructure (in the case of physical education, these are the playground, gymnasium and swimming pool). Classes are usually conducted in the first half of the day, and in some cases they may take place in the second half (e.g. swimming).

Individual work with children is widely used, which allows to approach their passive attitude (lack of participation in classes for health reasons, problems with acquiring knowledge and skills during group activities). Individual classes are conducted indoors or outdoors in all age groups during the time free from group activities.

These classes are of integrative nature. During them, children have an opportunity to learn about the surrounding nature. Based on the perception of nature, children learn to reflect the most characteristic features of nature in movement (during games and plays). After completing the exercises, the emotional impressions of children are reflected in creative activities (art, music).

When selecting movement games and plays for the basic part of physical education, the following aspects are taken into account: the movements in the game should coincide with the movements that children perform in a given activity; for the basic part, games with a high intensity range are selected, and for the final part – games with medium or low amplitude of movements. Movement games and activities are usually carried out during walks in order to save time for performing basic exercises. Movement games and activities are conducted according to the accepted rules: basic movements, which are part of games and plays, must be mastered by children earlier and must be selected in a fixed order (the range of movements in each game or play must be consistent with a given part of the classes).

While examining the role of games and plays in the psychophysical development of children, N.Y. Panhelova and D.L. Kharina notice that the basis for increasing children's physical activity in games and plays is: the correct selection of toys and helping children to choose them; the plot of the game; diversifying children's motor habits in the process of games with the use of various toys, devices and objects; and active communication between children during the game or play [8].

The basic organisational forms in the process of physical education in Ukrainian kindergartens include: frontal form, activities in teams and additional activities. The organisation of classes is based on the observance of the following prin-

principles: physical exercise should affect the development of all muscle groups; basic exercises should be selected taking into account the age criterion and the level of physical fitness; the exercises must be characterised by a different level of intensity, taking into account the load and time for a rest break for children; a leading exercise is chosen during the classes; it is necessary to observe graduality in teaching (transition from simple movements to more complex and demanding ones).

Health Days, Sports Days and walking trips play an important role in the physical education of pre-schoolers in Ukraine. Health Days are usually held once a month among all age groups. The main goal of this event is to engage all the children from a given institution. The event lasts all day long: after morning gymnastics, medium-intensity games are held, then sports games, relay games (for children of older groups), and exercises such as running, jumping, throwing are organised. During wintertime the programme of the Health Day (if the weather conditions allow it) consists of sledding competitions, less often skiing competitions (skiing for children of older groups at a distance of 600–700 m), and competitions in making a snowman. A “Tourist Day” is organised for children of middle and older groups. On this day right after breakfast children go on a walking trip (park, forest) or take part in a sightseeing trip. The Sports Day begins with a parade of participants. One of the important elements of the Sports Day is the display of children’s gymnastic exercises (the show consists of 10–12 gymnastic elements with the use of balls, hoops and pennants). Parents often participate in competitions with their children. As a rule, a physical education week is organised once every 3 months; the Sports Day is held two or three times a year (lasting from 50 minutes to 1 hour 20 minutes).

In some kindergartens in Ukraine, elements of football were effectively used during classes for children of older groups. These classes, as stated by O.Y. Konokh, on the basis of the results of his own empirical research, significantly contributed to the growth of motor features in children as such: speed, agility, muscle strength of arms and torso [4].

In the last decade, there has been a noticeable increase in interest in using the resources of folk physical culture in pre-school education. As A.Y. Volchyński and Y.A. Smal point out, the preschool period is the best time to teach folk games and plays that reflect centuries-old national traditions, creating the right emotional mood during physical education classes in kindergarten, favouring the development of patriotic, moral and pro-health attitudes [11].

As noted by O.I. Krasova and M.V. Kusai, physical activity forms used in the process of organising physical education in Ukrainian preschools are similar to those in other European countries. The curriculum consists of the following sections: 1. *Psychomotor development of children*. In the course of shaping psychomotor skills, children acquire basic knowledge about the human body, including the development of visual perception. 2. *Teaching basic motor skills and habits*.

This section with additional tasks includes such forms of physical activity as games and plays (development and improvement of basic skills: running, jumping, throwing, catching and bouncing the ball with hands and feet), gymnastics (balance exercises, walking exercises), and dancing, with the help of which children learn to interpret their movements and communicate. 3. *Motor preparation*. In addition to theoretical preparation, this section also tests the level of physical fitness of pre-schoolers. 4. *Swimming and water games*. Children learn to overcome the fear of water through games and plays, they also learn the basics of swimming and the rules of safe behaviour in water [6].

There are still shortcomings in pre-school education in Ukraine, such as: insufficient consideration given to the anatomical and physiological specificity of the organism of individual children and the accuracy of performing individual exercises when selecting methods and forms of teaching; irrational and incomplete use of available didactic resources (equipment) and field resources (surroundings of a given kindergarten), especially during the main part of the classes; lack of adequate preparation among teachers to conduct physical education classes with a given group of children. According to O. Boginich, the following mistakes are made when organising physical education classes in Ukrainian pre-schools: some teachers do not pay enough attention to motivating children to participate in these activities and there is insufficient consideration of the principle of systematicity in teaching motor skills [2].

On the basis of the analysis of the development of motor skills of preschool children, O. Konoch points out that a given child's individual features play a significant role there, which can be beneficial or detrimental to this development (this position significantly determines the content of the organisation of physical education classes in Ukrainian kindergartens). For example, in the first and second stages, teaching children cyclic movements (walking, running) has a positive effect on shaping agility. Maximum strength gain can lead to a reduction in overall endurance due to the fact that maximum muscle strength increases physical activity, and this is not always possible for preschool children. According to the researcher, the development of a child's agility occurs during exercises such as jumping or running in different directions, etc. The child's motor features will develop intensively if the physical load is not maximum, but optimal, not according to the age criterion, but to physiological parameters (heart rate, breathing, blood pressure) and to the child's individual characteristics, which will undoubtedly facilitate effective development of motor skills [5].

According to O.P. Aksonova, basic forms of physical education for preschool children should teach them how to skilfully move around in space (i.e. in a gymnasium or in the open air); equip children with the ability to control their own movements and improve them; and develop universal motor skills of children [1].

According to E.S. Vilchkovski and O.I. Kurok, a vital role in children's physical development is played by their conscious attitude to performing physical ex-

ercises suggested by the teacher, as well as being active and willing to perform the best possible movements, which in turn allows for the effective implementation of physical education tasks in kindergarten. As the researchers point out, in the preschool period, the skills and habits of performing general development exercises and exercises of a sports nature with elements of team games (basketball, volleyball, football, badminton, table tennis) are developed, which allows the child to feel more confident outside the premises of the kindergarten in various everyday situations, and the range of habits and motor skills, in turn, depends on such factors as equipping the kindergarten with sports equipment, children's health and physical fitness, the teacher's level of qualifications, and activity and participation of parents in physical development of their children. As these scientists point out, the tasks of physical education in preschool institutions must be aimed at the comprehensive development of the child, body hardening, the development of physical fitness through such forms of physical activity as: morning gymnastics, movement games, sports games, swimming, but the implementation of these tasks should be conditioned by rational nutrition [10].

An important element of the effectiveness of physical education of pre-school children in Ukraine is the integration of physical education forms with music and dance. According to E.S. Vilchkovski, N. Denisenko, J. Shevchenko, musical accompaniment during children's physical exercises is conducive to more precise performance of individual movements and creates an appropriate emotional mood. Music has a positive effect on the well-being of children, requires them to perform specific movements more vigorously in accordance with the character and form of a piece of music. Dance exercises used in older groups during the classes promote grace, rhythmic and expressive movements and they also shape the correct posture. According to the researchers, musical accompaniment helps in increasing the physical activity of children in class by up to 15–20%, because pre-schoolers, by performing exercises (basic, general development, etc.) in such conditions, increase their physical endurance and better endure higher loads. The use of music during physical exercises, as the researchers point out, is one of the most active forms of a child's interaction with music, and at the same time, the tasks of both physical education and musical education in kindergarten are combined [9].

E.S. Vilchkovski distinguishes four groups of factors that significantly affect the effectiveness of conducting classes for children. The first group includes individual character traits of pre-schoolers, the level of knowledge and skills in the field of physical fitness, health; interest in physical exercise and the level of their activity. The second group consists of the specificity and nature of the proposed physical exercises, the scope of their difficulties, novelty (introducing unknown exercises into the structure of the classes) and the emotional aspect. The third group includes external conditions for exercising (place, climate, material facilities and equipping the facility with sports equipment adapted to the age criterion).



The fourth group of factors contains the level of qualifications and the scope of teachers' readiness to conduct classes [9].

## Conclusion

Physical education in the pre-school system of Ukraine plays a very important role in the process of upbringing and teaching children. It is based on a solid theoretical and methodological basis. Taking into account the very disturbing data over the last two decades on the health of children and adolescents in Ukraine, the significance of physical education is crucial for the future of the country. The problem, as in other educational areas of Ukraine, is lack of funds to create a modern infrastructure for the implementation of goals and tasks set in the guidelines for children's physical activity. Despite these difficulties, the organisation of activities in kindergarten supporting the psychophysical development of children is relatively effective, although this effort is often thwarted by omissions at the next stages of school education. An important factor enhancing the effectiveness of physical education of preschool children is the creation of the position of a physical education teacher in preschool institutions and the possibility of choosing alternative physical education programmes, but the effects of these solutions still need to be waited for.

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