

On Formation of Ethnical Identity of a Child in Multicultural Environment of Preschool Education

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ABSTRACT

The relevance of the research issue is explained in terms of necessity to form positive ethnical identification of a human in a changing multicultural society. The ethnical identity is one of the characteristic features of a human's personality; the foundation is laid in early childhood. The preschool age is the most important period in forming the self-awareness, the ethnical identity being the part of it. The aim of the article is to show how the problem is solved in kindergartens in the multicultural environment of preschool education observed in the multinational Volga region of the Russian Federation - the Republic of Tatarstan. The methods used in the article are based on the axiological approach in which the human is perceived as the highest value of society and the aim of the societal development; the personality-oriented approach which helps to define both individual personal characteristics and social ones showing the place of a human in society. The result of the research is the recommendations to educators of preschool educational institutions to organize multicultural education of children referring to their ethnical identity. The materials can be useful for everyone who deals with preschool children and train teachers to work in preschool educational institutions.

KEYWORDS

Multicultural education for preschool children,
ethnical identity of preschool children

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Introduction

Actualizing the problem

Within the last decades the education in Russia became multicultural in character (Gabdulkhakov, 2012). This issue is especially relevant for the Middle Volga region, an original and interesting historical and cultural area in the Eastern Europe. Since ancient times this region was settled by different ethnic groups: the Mordovians, the Mari, the Udmurt, who belong to Finno-Ugric group as well as the

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Turk peoples: the Chuvash, the Volga region Tatars, the Nogais, and the Bashkir. In the middle of XVI century a mass migration of the Russian people started. The historical and ethnographical diversity of domestic and economic life, psychology, spiritual culture of the peoples leaving in the area was formed within a long period of time and preserved until nowadays. The peoples of the Volga region and the Cisurals established long-term relations that led to the formation of common features (Kharisova, 2005). At the same time each ethnic group strived for preserving their national identity. Despite the separating processes within the ethnic groups, the Republic of Tatarstan manages to maintain stability, balance and positive international agreement of the peoples. It is not a secret that such processes can be dynamic and change depending on political, economic, religious and other external situations (Magun, 2006). The research works of some scientists point at the presence of national aggression among students and academic staff which is often connected with national self-determination of the personality or belonging to this or that religion (Gabdulchakov & Yashina, 2015). One of the reasons of this is the fact that positive ethnical identity was not formed at the early age.

Explore Importance of the Problem

Ethnic identity is one of the urgent and widely-discussed issues in science and practice. Every time Russia faces with new challenges when the political situation changes. In the conditions of transformation of national identity in the Ukraine and other post-Soviet Republics the consideration of the issue of forming the ethnical identity since preschool time becomes up-to-date. The sociologists suppose that the current ethnical identity in modern Russia, on the one hand, can play a negative role: the formation of ethnical nationalism resulted in disintegration of multinational country. On the other hand, ethnical identity of the person provides stability, gives inner psychological defense and is able to perform the mobilizing power which helps to create the conditions for consolidation of the society and formation of civil identity (Snezhkova, 2013). A lot depends on the educational strategy chosen by the government and society as well as ideas translated to future residents of the country by the system of education (Drobizheva, 2011). The educator in the kindergarten forms the national self-awareness of a child through teaching the native language, traditions, customs, and values of the ethnic group. However, the process of forming the ethnical identity of a child can lead to the appearance of two scenarios in their self-awareness: nihilistic that refuses and neglects the ethnical identity and culture; and national-chauvinistic, expressing only ethnical priorities and the role and the place of other peoples (Snezhkova, 1983). So, it is important to lead parallel work and show other ethnic groups and culture to a child not to miss the sensitive period of perceiving the information about other languages and cultures, not limiting the world of social contacts of the children (Valerian & Gabdulchakov, 2011).

Methodological Framework

The scientific approaches to the problem of multicultural education were discussed in the works of foreign researches: C.A. Grant (2008), A. Portera (2008), C.E. Sleeter, (1996), A.M. Sedano (2002) and others. Different aspects of the development of a child were studied within multicultural education in Russia: A.N. Dzhurinsky (2007), G.D. Dmitriyev (1999), G.V. Palatkina (2001), V.V. Makaev, Z.A. Malkova & L.L. Suprunova and others (1999), V.F. Gabdulchakov (2011) and so on. The multicultural education is the process of forming a personality who is able to

lead active and efficient life in multinational and multicultural environment. Such a person has a developed feeling of understanding and respect towards other cultures, skills for living in peace and agreement with people of different nationalities, races, beliefs (Khukhlaeva, 2013). The multicultural education among preschool children was studied by such researchers as: N.V. Kaguy (2004), G.F. Yusupova, (2012), T.L. Fadeeva (2011), E.A. Remarchuk (2014).

The problem of studying ethnical identity was revealed in the works of those scientists who studied this phenomenon in the cultural context: J.W. Berry et al. (2011), W.B. Gudykunst (2003), H. Tajfel (1982), H.C. Triandis (2007); in social and ethno-psychological aspect: L.M. Drobizheva (2011). The formation of ethnical identity among the preschool children has been shown in the works of recent times: E.S. Babunova (2009), E.R. Tyulepaeva (2011), S.N. Fedorova (2011), V.F. Petrova (2014), O.N. Yudenko (2000), O.A. Romanova (1994) and others. The researches prove that the development of ethnical identity starts at the preschool age and this is an essential condition for normal life of a person in the future. On the basis of positively formed ethnical identity the process of formation of inner culture, values, tolerant behavior, starts (Bezyuleva et al, 2013). Ethnical identity both as a process and structure is formed in the process of activity development and communication (Babynina, 2006). Ethnical identity appears with the birth of a child, the ability to speak native language, cultural environment, which define common standards of behavior and self-realization of a person.

Studying ethnical identity, the interdisciplinary approach is usually used in combination with social, psychological, political and historical aspects. Ethnical identity is proved by many researchers to be a part of social identity of a person. In the structure of ethnical identity there are three main components. The cognitive one: knowledge or ideas about peculiarities of ethnical groups and perceiving yourself as its member on the basis of certain outer and inner features. The affective one: the assessment of the features of own ethnical group, relation towards membership, significance of this membership. Behavioral one: not only awareness, but the mechanism of showing yourself as a member of a certain ethnical group (Stefanenko, 2004).

Many authors proved that elementary forms of ethnical identity exist even at preschool age and connected it with defining 'Self', the processes of identification, perceiving the opportunities, actions and activities. At the preschool age mechanisms of uniting and separating ethnical ideas start to form. The awareness of yourself as a member of a certain ethnical group is accompanied with the appearance of the feeling 'we' or the process of social identification. It is noted that in the regions of complicated ethnical structure where the education has multicultural character, the formation of ethnical identity goes faster that is defined by more intensive inter-ethnical interaction (Platonov, 2003).

The researches specify age frames in the development of ethnical identity. The first features of diffusive identity with ethnic group is defined at the age 3-4.

Z. Freud considered ethnical identity as unconscious connections between a child and parents as well the important mechanism of interaction between an individual and social group (Freud, 1990).

In the process of its establishment, ethnical identity goes through several stages.

A child received the first fragmental and non-systematic knowledge about their ethnical identity. At this age the most important is family and social environment, but not the country and ethnic group;

At the age of 8-9 a child identifies themselves with their ethnic group, sets the basis of identification – the nationality of parents, the place of living, the mother tongue. National feelings awake;

During early teenage age (10-11) ethnical identity forms in full scale, a child notices the uniqueness of history and domestic cultural life (Piaget, 1951).

More often ethnical identity is promoted by the society, directly forming a positive attitude towards themselves and own ethnic group. However, growing older, a child may understand that their positive relation contradicts to negative relation of the majority.

G.U. Soldatova (1998) singled out the following types of ethnical identity:

- normal identity: the image of a nation is perceived as a positive one;
- ethno-centered identity: the accent is made on the importance of ethnicity, its unconditional non-critical preference;
- ethno-dominant identity: ethnical identity becomes significant among other kinds of identity. Achieving the aims, interests of peoples are being perceived as unconditional dominant value;
- ethnical fanaticism: the absolute dominance of ethnical interests and aims is accompanied by readiness to sacrifice up to the use of terrorism;
- ethnical indifference: people are practically indifferent to the problems of ethnicity and inter-ethnical relationships, own and other peoples values;
- ethno-nihilism: the denial of ethnicity, ethnical ethnocultural values showing themselves 'as a man of a world' (Soldatova, 1998).

It is important that normal ethnical identity is formed at the preschool age. It gives a deep respect to ethnical identity of other people and tolerant awareness. A big role in transferring ethnocultural information is performed within a family. The family is a place where a child meets with the elements of ethnical culture: traditions, customs, and folklore.

The theoretical analysis of the issue of the research and the experience of preschool institutions helped to establish an idea that educational technology of forming ethnical identity of a preschool child should be considered as a cooperation of a teacher with a child in the form of a dialogue of cultures and match the upbringing kind relation to the representatives of other ethnical groups and their culture.

Materials and Methods

The tasks of the research

1. To analyze the literature on psychology and pedagogics focusing on the issue of the research.
2. To define the criteria of ethnical identity of the children in preschool age.
3. To develop the action plan for forming ethnical identity of the children in preschool age.
4. Check its effectiveness through the pedagogical experiment.

Theoretical and empirical methods

To conduct the research a set of methods was used: analysis of psychological, pedagogical and methodological literature on the theory and practice of national, international upbringing and education of the children in preschool age; observation of children; communication with them; interviewing parents; the methods by E.K. Suslova (1994) 'Treat with a sweet' and 'The Sisters'; the method by E.D. Martsynkovskaya (1997). Data processing was made by the way of qualitative and quantitative analysis.

The trial infrastructure) and stages of the research

At the first stage the study and analysis of the literature was made, including the development of the program of the experiment.

At the second stage the experimental work on checking the hypothesis was realized.

At the third stage the results of the experimental research was made; the conclusions were formulated, the recommendations to those who work at preschool educational institutions were given.

Evaluation criteria

Among the criteria on ethical identity of a preschool child are: ethnical self-identification, emotional attitude to oneself and others based in cultural and spiritual values of the ethnic group, 'I' image (Mikhaleva, 2003).

Experimental procedure and its description

The children at the age of 6-7 from several kindergartens of Kazan took part in the research. 30 children formed a control group, another 30 children – an experimental group. The national list of children in groups: in the target – 13 Russians, 12 Tatars, 5 – other nationalities; in the experimental group – 10 Russians, 15 Tatars, 5 – other nationalities.

During the conversation with children and their parent the following aspects were defined: whether the child knows the nationality of their parents, what language is spoken at home, what elements of national culture the child knows, what is the attitude to these elements and the relation towards other nationalities, whether it is good or bad, etc.

In the first series of diagnostic tasks the ideas about oneself were defined. The pictures of children were analyzed. The aim of the second series of the tasks was to study the level of self-awareness of a child. The children were asked about their desires and preferences. The third series included the set of tasks 'Ladder' which helped to study the 'I' image and self-esteem, the attitude of a child towards themselves.

The method 'Treat with a sweet' included offering children of different nationalities a candy. The character of children's activities was defined. It was noted whether the children are egoistic or kind, show preference or equally kind to everyone, what the motivation is.

In the method 'The Sisters' the children invented the ending of the story and directly or indirectly showed tolerance to children of other nationalities. Thanks to this method the general impression to the attitude of senior preschool children to their peers of different nationalities was checked as well as the level of their tolerance. The attitude towards the peers of other races was tested: kind, indifferent, malevolent (those who couldn't continue the story).

Results

The description of the events to form ethnical identity of a preschool child

To achieve the tasks of the research the experimental group used the activity directed to form positive ethnical identity of the children and upbringing friendly attitude towards to languages and cultures of other nations. Among the tasks of the research are: 1. The formation of positive T' image. 2. The involvement children and their parents into study of native culture and language. 3. Showing traditions and customs with the elements of folklore of the ethnic group to children. 4. Making children closer to the art of the Volga region art. 5. Upbringing patriotic feelings and love to Motherland.

The first task was achieved with the help of 'Child's portfolio' technology. Together with parents in the experimental group the 'Colouring book portfolio' was chosen. In the process of filling in the parts with parents, the child had the opportunity to express individuality, uniqueness, including ethnic identity.

Great attention in Tatarstan is paid on studying two state languages: Russian and Tatar. There are special rooms equipped with everything that helps to study the language in the form of a play. The specialists in linguistics hold the classes regularly. This task received a certain attention.

The teachers in the experimental group created a perspective plan to show the national culture and the culture of other peoples using the elements of folklore. Different methods of interaction with children were used: conversations, game-classes, drama-classes, literature reading, excursions, music classes, handcraft, etc. The games planned and the classes with children encouraged the development of the ideas about the world of nature, subjects, and other people, and, at last, the inner world (self-awareness) of every child.

In the experimental group the knowledge of local lore of different Republics (Russia, Tatarstan, Chuvashia, and Bashkiriya) was formed. They children were acquainted with national crafts, customs, traditions, and the way of life of each ethnic group. The conversations about peoples who live on the territory of Tatarstan, the history, traditions and the way of life were organized as well as the observation of illustrations and topical albums. The children studied the fairytales of the Russian, Tatar, Chuvash, and Bashkir peoples; learned nursery rhymes, counting-out rhyme, slogans, and sayings.

The process of game activity expanded their knowledge about national games. Through the game children could learn the peculiarities of national culture. The games involved the use of national toy, didactic games, and table games. The role games included the domestic staff of different ethnic groups, theatrical games on the basis of national fairytales.

The knowledge and ideas about the artistic life, creativity of the nations also enriched children's background. The children were developed the feeling of harmony, beauty and created them in their activity. They were offered to draw the ornamental elements of every nation, their images based on national song, fairytale and saying; to mould out of clay different items of dishes, national toys. In the free form the children coloured national clothes and dishes.

The children also learned about musical folklore of the peoples who live on the territory of Tatarstan through listening to national songs and national instruments. They sang Russian, Tatar, Chuvash and other peoples' songs; celebrated national holidays such as: 'Kolyadki', 'Navruz', 'Seren' and 'Maslenitsa'; learned national dances; organized concerts for younger children and parents. The children also visited the museum of local lore, exhibitions devoted to national toy and craft works.

They were acquainted with labour traditions and customs of different peoples. During these activities the children made national presents, toys, souvenirs, the elements of national costumes (necklace, kolfak, kerchief, etc.).

The parents were also involved into different activities with their children. The teachers in the experimental group organized consultations, educational talks, parents' meetings, and discussions. Together with their parents children held: concerts, contests, national celebrations, created national costumes, souvenirs and presents. The well-rounded educational work helped to achieved the set goals.

The results of the experiment

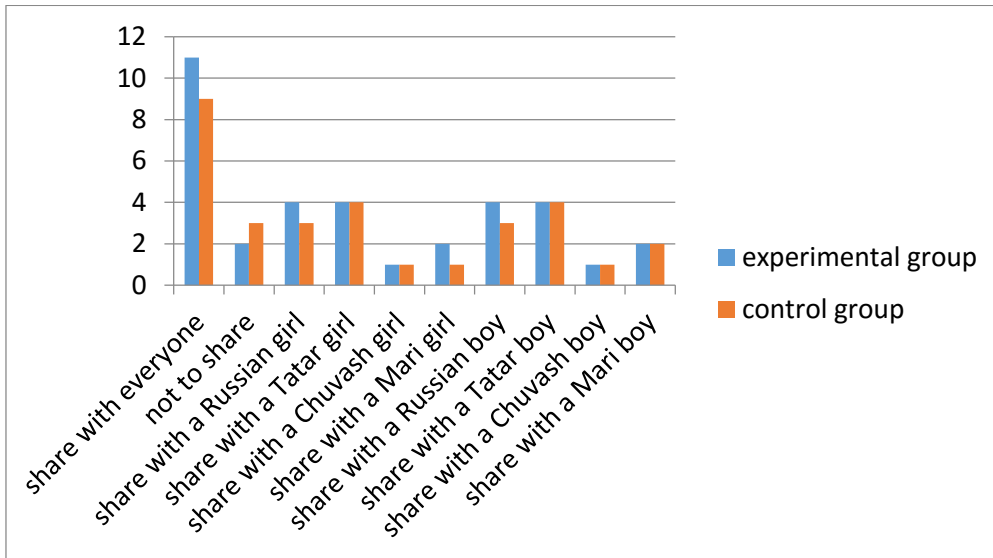


Figure 1. The comparative data based on the method 'Treat with a sweet' at the summative stage of the experiment.

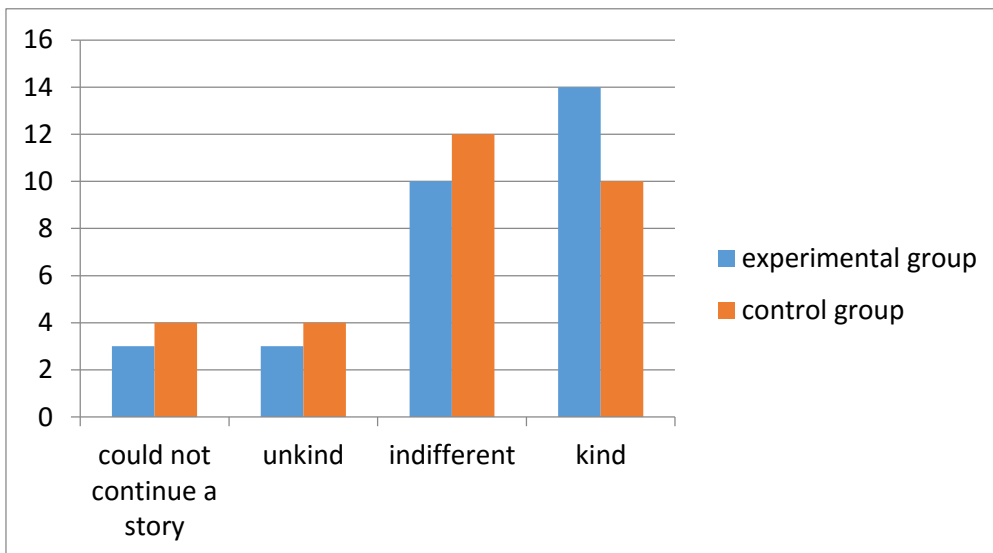


Figure 2. The comparative data based on the method 'The Sisters' at the summative stage of the experiment.

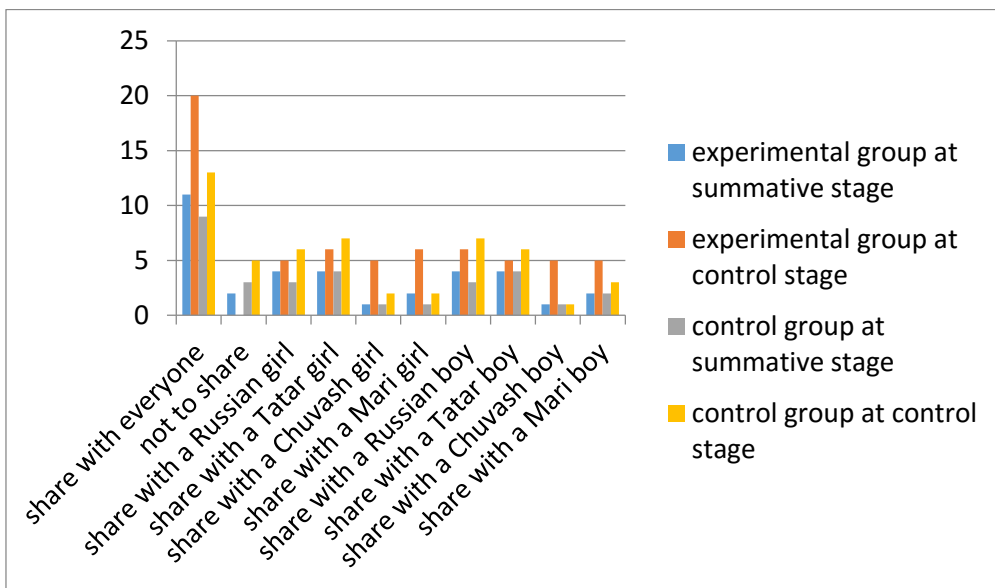


Figure 3. The comparative data based on the diagnosis 'Treat with a sweet' (the summative and control stages).

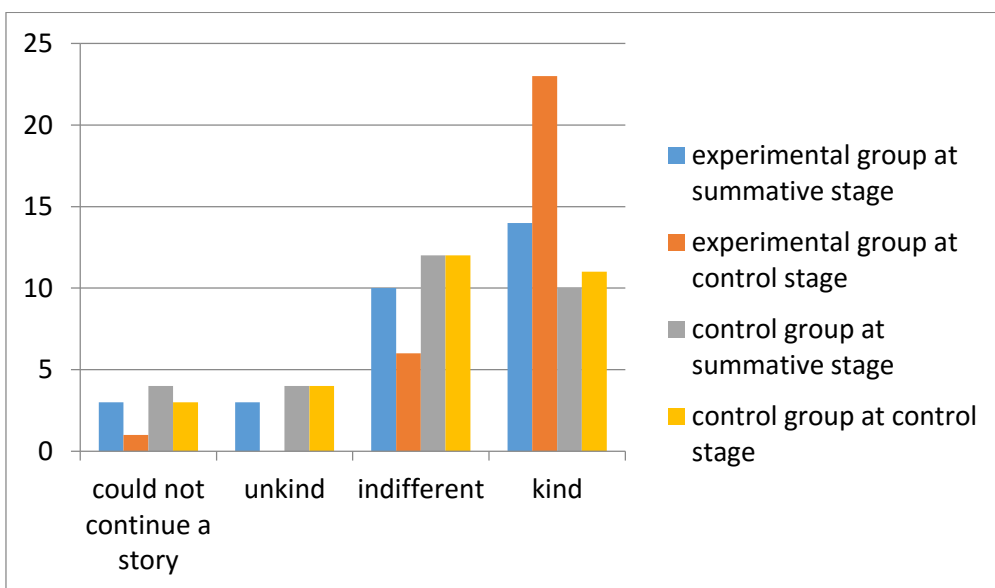


Figure 4. The comparative data based on the diagnosis 'The Sisters'.

All knowledge begins with wonder. The surprise caused by the new leads to the development of curiosity, followed by the formation of students' interest in sustainable chemistry and motivation for its study, the needs of self-development and self-improvement.

Considering the informational and educational environment of the school developing education it can not be ignored the issue of information culture of the teacher. Informational culture is understood as a component in the structure of cultural identity associated with its activity-party information, including as an

essential component of scientific ability to explain natural and manmade phenomenon.

It is important for teachers is that when teaching chemistry the use of electronic educational resources as part of information technologies allows harmonious, concentrated and unobtrusively integrated chemical education in developing material that can generate interest. This biographical information about the scientists explain mysteries of nature, the virtual rational and the irrational use of natural resources, and others. In addition, to demonstrate without harm to the environment impact of chemical production (its waste or harmful chemical emissions), exhaust, unauthorized storage of waste on the environment, present computer animation and virtual models of human events and disasters. Computer technology in chemical education in the educational process allows to combine playing and learning cognitive activity. All knowledge begins with wonder. The surprise caused by the new leads to the development of curiosity, followed by the formation of students' interest in sustainable chemistry and motivation for its study, the needs of self-development and self-improvement.

However, it should be recognized that the skills formed in the virtual world are not always adequate in relation to the real objects and are applicable in the real world. In the new informational and educational developing environment, the role of real scientific explanation of natural phenomena, in particular chemical, taking into account public concern ecological and chemical problems in the world.

Briefly distinguish main functions as an explanation of the basic procedure of scientific thought in the natural sciences and chemistry, including:

1) it is a specific explanation of the logical-didactic way disclosure of the studied theories, laws, concepts;

2) an explanation - it is a way of comprehensive theoretical analysis of the studied any object of natural science;

3) explanation is the way to prove the truth, the logical validity of conclusions about the nature of the studied natural science facts, laws, phenomena.

Discussions

At the beginning of the experimental work ethnical self-identity of children in a control and experimental groups was defined through the conversation. The analysis of the answers showed that all children know their national belonging, native language, the Republic they live in. Not all children speak their native language at home. Less confident the children were in naming other nationalities, especially on the Volga region. They often had difficulties in naming the representatives of other nationalities in their age group. These led to the conclusion that some children that participated in the interview had accidental experience in cooperation with the representatives of neighboring peoples; the knowledge about ethnical culture was rather low.

Then a series of diagnostic tasks on defining 'I' image was organized. The processing of the results of three series of tasks showed that the level of ideas about themselves is not high. The children had only formal desire to be 'I am the best'. The data received helped to come to a conclusion about the necessity to encourage children to form images about themselves.

During the experiments the developed methods 'Treat with a sweet' and 'The Sisters' were tested. Most children in both groups share sweets; they are kind and practically equal in their attitude to the representative of other ethnic groups.

The method 'The Sisters' helped to define the attitude of preschool children to peers of different race. Most of the children are kind, tolerant to other nationalities. However, some of them showed preference to the same nationality to which they belong.

The survey held among the parents showed that parents of all ethnic groups are interested in their child speaking the native language, knowing the traditions, customs and religion of their nation. The results showed that some parents are irritated when somebody speaks different language in their presence and they do not know what these people are talking about. Some parents are not interested in the culture of neighboring peoples.

The control stage of the experiment was held with the use of the same methods. The results showed that most children from the experimental group had high level of 'I' image. At the same time there were insignificant changes in the control group where the method of 'Portfolio' was not used.

The experimental group improved results considerably by using the methods 'Treat with a sweet' and 'The Sisters'. Also the successes of children in studying native language were rather essential.

Conclusion

Ethical identity is a psychological category which reflects self-determination of a person in ethnocultural environment. The basis for ethnical identity as an actively developing notion are formed at the preschool age and transformed in reaction to significant events in the life of a person. The formation, preservation and strengthening of ethnical identity in a child since preschool age is an obligatory condition of saving the ethnic group as an independent one in multicultural society.

The formation of ethnical identity at preschool age should exist in close cooperation of parents, children and teachers. While teaching a native language and national literature, the teacher needs to work with parents, explaining the importance of upbringing tolerance and culture of international communication. The work on training teachers who can work with children in multicultural environment should also be organized (Petrova, 2015).

Recommendations

The result of the research is the recommendations to educators of preschool educational institutions to organize multicultural education of children referring to their ethnical identity. The materials can be useful for everyone who deals with preschool children and train teachers to work in preschool educational institutions.

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