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PLAY IN CHILDREN'S EVERYDAY LIFE AND PROBLEMS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF PLAY CULTURE IN MODERN CHILDHOOD

Abstract: *the article examines play as a key mechanism of children's socialization, cognition, and personal development. It focuses on how digitalization, intensive parenting, and reduced free time transform play culture. The main problems include the replacement of free play with programmed activities, the loss of traditional play practices, and the pseudo-play nature of many digital products. Information technologies are viewed both as a risk and as a possible tool for supporting play culture.*

Keywords: *children's play, play culture, everyday life, digitalization, childhood studies, information technologies, free play.*

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ИГРА В ПОВСЕДНЕВНОЙ ЖИЗНИ ДЕТЕЙ И ПРОБЛЕМЫ РАЗВИТИЯ ИГРОВОЙ КУЛЬТУРЫ В СОВРЕМЕННОМ ДЕТСТВЕ

***Аннотация:** в статье рассматривается игра как ключевой механизм социализации, познания и личностного развития детей. Особое внимание уделяется тому, как цифровизация, интенсивное воспитание и сокращение свободного времени изменяют игровую культуру. Основные проблемы включают замену свободной игры программируемой деятельностью, утрату традиционных игровых практик и псевдоигровой характер многих цифровых продуктов. Информационные технологии рассматриваются как фактор риска и как возможный инструмент поддержки игровой культуры.*

***Ключевые слова:** детская игра, игровая культура, повседневность, цифровизация, исследования детства, информационные технологии, свободная игра.*

Introduction.

Play is not just entertainment for a child, but a leading activity through which cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development occurs. In pedagogy, play is viewed as a key mechanism for understanding the world, testing social roles, and developing self-regulation.

However, modern childhood has changed significantly over the past two decades. Increased screen time, intensive education, and safety concerns have reduced free, spontaneous play. Therefore, the development of play culture is not only a pedagogical issue, but a systemic challenge affecting children's overall development.

The purpose of this article is to identify current problems of play in children's everyday life and to propose ways to develop play culture, considering both the risks and possibilities of information technologies.

1. The concept of play culture and its place in the everyday life of modern childhood.

Play culture is a set of stable practices, norms, values, artifacts, and ways of transmitting play experience in a particular society. It includes game plots and roles, rules of interaction, toys, play spaces, and forms of adult participation.

In traditional societies, play culture was transmitted naturally: older children taught younger ones, and play often took place in mixed-age groups. In modern childhood, however, children's everyday life is increasingly structured by adults. Free, spontaneous play has decreased, while digital games occupy a growing part of children's leisure time.

The «disappearance of the yard» has deprived children of autonomous spaces for collective play. As a result, play is often pushed into the remaining free time or replaced by organized activities with fixed rules.

2. Key problems in the development of play culture in modern childhood.

Five interrelated problems can be identified.

First, free play is increasingly replaced by programmed activity. Parents and teachers often use play for didactic purposes, with fixed goals and expected outcomes. As a result, children lose opportunities to invent rules, create plots, self-organize, resolve conflicts, and develop imagination independently.

Second, the intergenerational transmission of play practices is weakening. Traditional street games were once passed from older children to younger ones, but mixed-age groups have become less common, and communication has partly moved into digital environments. This disrupts the continuity of play culture.

Third, many digital products have a pseudo-play nature. Commercial games often rely on simple actions, reward systems, and stereotyped plots. They create the illusion of play but do not always develop imagination, complex rules, or real social interaction. Creative games and sandboxes can be useful, but they require adult mediation.

Fourth, intensive parenting and safety concerns reduce spontaneous play. Parents often replace yard play with supervised clubs and activities, although the lack of free play may harm the development of social skills.

Fifth, play spaces are being destroyed or simplified. Standard playgrounds with slides and swings rarely encourage complex role-playing, construction, climbing, or the creation of «secret» children's spaces.

3. The dual role of information technologies in the development of play culture.

Information technologies in children's play culture can have both destructive and constructive roles. On the one hand, they may replace live communication with online play, reduce physical activity, commercialize play through loot boxes and subscriptions, and offer ready-made plots that limit imagination.

On the other hand, IT can support play culture: children can use digital tools to design games and quests, while adults can create archives of traditional games, organize hybrid forms of play, and use technology to enrich real interaction.

The key principle is that IT should be a tool, not a replacement for reality. A child should first learn to play through real interaction, and only then use digital tools to expand play opportunities.

4. Directions for the development of play culture in modern childhood.

Based on the analysis, four practical directions can be proposed.

Direction 1: Restoration of play spaces.

Creation of «enabling environments» in yards and parks: zones for construction, role-playing (a hut, a ship), unstructured movement (hills, logs, ropes). Successful examples: adventure playgrounds in the UK and Denmark, where children can use tools and build structures under adult supervision.

Direction 2: Training of adults (parents and teachers) in play pedagogy.

Many adults have forgotten how to play themselves or believe that play requires special training. Short courses and manuals on «How to support free play without interfering» are needed. The role of an adult is not to control but to create conditions and provide a resource for the development of the game.

Direction 3: Digital moderation.

Not a ban on digital games but a transition to conscious use. Recommendations for parents: choose sandbox and creative games, set limits on automatic «clicker» games, use joint digital play as a reason for subsequent live play (e.g., after a session in Minecraft, building a hut from real boxes).

Direction 4: Preservation of traditional play culture through digital archives.

Creating open databases of folk and yard games with descriptions, videos, and rules. This will allow teachers and parents to restore the lost repertoire. Such databases can be integrated into school programs.

Conclusion.

Play in children's everyday life is not a luxury but a basic need of a developing personality. Modern childhood is experiencing a crisis of play culture: free play is being replaced by programmed activities, play spaces are shrinking, and intergenerational transmission is being disrupted. Information technologies contribute to the problem (pseudo-play, screen addiction) but can also be part of the solution (digital archives, hybrid forms, design tools). The main task for adults – parents, teachers, and city planners – is to consciously protect and develop play culture. Without this, we risk raising a generation capable of operating only within given rules, incapable of creativity, conflict resolution, and self-organization. The direction for further research is the development of criteria for assessing the developmental quality of digital products for children and the piloting of hybrid playgrounds.

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