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PRESCHOOL EDUCATION IN RUSSIA AND MONGOLIA (ANALYTICAL ASPECT OF THE MODERN STATE)*

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Abstract. The state of modern preschool education in Russia and Mongolia is discussed in this paper. It is pointed out that preschool education is an integral and full-fledged part of the state general education system in both countries. This paper notes that preschool education aims not only to prepare five- to six-year-old children for school education but also, more importantly, to develop a healthy personality and self-esteem in preschool children. It is concluded that the system of preschool education in Mongolia is still at a developing stage, while Russia has enough experience to expand and enrich the education system as a whole.

Keywords: *preschool childhood, preschool education, school preparation, preschool institutions of Mongolia, Russian education system, education through playing and gaming.*

The problem of preschool education is pertinent not only in Russia. In a number of countries (England, Cuba, the United States, and others), since the middle of the 20th century, preschool education has received considerable attention not only from scientists and teachers but also from the general public. It is not only problems related to the organization of preschool education that are discussed. The question of who and how children should be prepared for school or later life is being raised in a broader context. The very idea of the term “preschool education” is controversial.

In Russia, the definition of preschool education is set out in the Concept of the Federal Target Program for Educational Development 2006–2010. Preschool education is located at the state level and is defined as “an educational system for children of upper preschool age, ensuring equal starting opportunities for learning in elementary school” [1]. It is important to note that preschool education was originally based on humanistic principles. It focused on children’s spiritual and moral development, improving individual abilities rather than excessive intellectualization and sharpening of cognitive skills. These priorities imply the need for effective integration of preschool children into the community of older children, including (and this is very important) successful communication with adults (teachers, parents) and peers. In addition, it is important to note the main tasks of preschool education in the context of school preparation: the formation and regulation of meaningful behavioral responses; the formation of complex skills and habits of language and thinking activity (abstraction, analysis, generalization, comparison); the development of effective communication skills in all types of activities; the formation and

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optimization of children's cognitive and creative needs; the physical development and maintenance of children's health. Most researchers agree that the essential task of preschool education is to ensure the successful socialization and positive cognitive and communication development of children.

Leading scientists in this field (O.V. Almazova, A.G. Asmolov, T.I. Babaeva, M.M. Bezrukikh, N.F. Vinogradova, A.G. Gogoberidze, O.A. Karabanova) believe that preschool education should become a stage that allows a smooth transition from preschool age (5–6 years) to elementary school age (6–7 years). Preschool children differ from younger pupils in a number of specific psychological characteristics. They are characterized by particular referents in motivational-intellectual, and regulatory domains. So, based on the research of Tomsk scientists, especially the work of G. H. Vahitova, we can say that preschool education in the framework of the preparation for school is a unique pedagogical process in which teachers and children interact as subjects of activity. Such pedagogical process leads to assertive changes in preschool children's needs and processes of thinking and acting [2]. As practice shows, these activities provide an opportunity to prepare children for elementary school psychologically and thus solve the problem of successful adaptation in the first year of school.

Given the important role that the preschool age plays in the formation of personality, it is necessary to use only those educational technologies that are effective and adapted to the age of children. In this sense, play techniques and play itself remain fundamental to any activity with children [3].

Today, an essential issue in the organization of preschool education is the diversity of programs, technologies, methods, and forms of education that meet the requirements of the Federal Education Standards. Regardless of the type of preschool educational institution, the educational process includes cooperation between adults and children, as well as children's independence in play and pedagogical-cognitive activities. At the same time, the central role should be assigned to the joint (partnership) activity of children and adults. Education and organization of the learning environment should correspond to the age specifics of children's development. Most parents (legal representatives) and teachers consider preschool education as an opportunity for the holistic intellectual development of the child. This is the so-called "school type" of education: development of arithmetic, writing, and reading skills; learning a foreign language; following the instructions of an adult (a teacher or parent); self-mastery of disciplines, independent performance of a task, i.e., it is an earlier mastery of the first-grade school program. This, in turn, negatively affects preschool children's immediate, personal and physical development. It is believed that preschool children "do not have the opportunity to develop according to their needs and abilities when exposed to an educational load that is not appropriate for their age" [4]. This is confirmed by years of research by G. H. Vakhitova: "Today, there is a general trend among teachers and parents to increase and expand the criteria for preparing children for school education. There is an overabundance of information in preschool programs" [5, pp. 9–10]. Despite the existing problems, modern preschool education in Russia, meeting the requirements of the Federal Education Standard, is focused on variability and the use of alternative programs, forms, and methods. This situation of preschool education is overall beneficial for all parties involved (teachers, parents, and most importantly, children). They have the opportunity to choose the right and urgent ways of development.

Having outlined the current state of preschool education in Russia, let us now turn to Mongolia's problems and prospects for development. We should note that in Mongolia, as in Russia, the issues of preschool education are becoming increasingly urgent in connection with the process of modernization of the whole educational system. The development of preschool

education in Mongolia is taking place in several stages: in 1991, compulsory education was abolished in Mongolia, which led to a deterioration in the quality of primary education. In 2001, the 12 years program was introduced, and at the end of 2010, state education standards were introduced throughout Mongolia. Since 2011, the so-called intensification of education reform (i.e., the introduction of a completely new major education program) began to take effect in all educational organizations nationwide, and this process is still in its current phase. In connection with the transition to 12-year education, six-year-old children enter elementary school, where education lasts five years, because “early enrollment of children is the basis for the successful acquisition of academic disciplines and general development.” [6, p. 511]. Given this situation, the Ministry of Education and Science of Mongolia has prepared various projects and programs to rethink the conditions for enrolling preschool children in elementary school.

Despite the radical changes in preschool education in Mongolia, especially in the management of preschool educational institutions, these changes “have not touched the problems of the content, methods, and organization of the educational process” [7, p. 104]. This lies in the fact that funding for the modernization of Mongolia’s education system was provided by a group of interested governmental organizations from the United States, Europe, Asia, and international associations such as the IMF and the World Bank, up to UNICEF. However, these various innovative programs and projects were not coordinated with each other, either in content or in the form of implementation, which led to a number of contradictions. As a result, in preschool education in Mongolia, “different variants of education programs adapted to Mongolian conditions were created” [8, p. 165]. Thus, the education system in Mongolia consists of a compulsory and a non-compulsory subsystem, and preschool education is the main basis for compulsory education. Kindergarten is the main institution for preschool education. It is responsible for the care and development of preschool children aged 2 to 6 years, conducts teaching and educational activities, and provides childcare.

The Ministry of Education of Mongolia pays special attention to the state of preschool education, which naturally attracts the interest of scientists who study issues related to preparing children for school. In the last ten years, according to the Scientific Electronic Library eLIBRARY.RU, fourteen publications have appeared on issues and problems of preschool education, including publications in Mongolia (Table 1).

2. In addition to the state system of preschool education (kindergarten), alternative forms are also developing. These include Kindergarten Yurts, care, and education centers, Visiting Teachers, and distance learning. These include preschool programs in Mongolia that correlate with the forms of Mobile Teachers (traveling teachers); Visiting Teachers; Mobile Ger-kindergartens, and Shift Classes [10, p. 14].

According to the Law on Child Care Services of the Government of Mongolia (2015), the organizational forms of preschool education (especially preschool education) are represented by services labeled “1–7”. We want to clarify that “1–7” is the form of preschool education based on the age of children, the purpose of the service, the professional status of teachers, and the affiliation with the relevant ministry. Based on the data presented by researchers Jamsrandorjiin Batdelger and Cedengijn Erdenechimeg, it can be argued that these modern alternative forms of preschool education provide a qualitatively new approach to the development and preparation of Mongolian children for school. These forms include the Kindergarten Yurt and Visiting Teachers [11, pp. 19–20], largely because “the learning process in kindergartens is monotonous and largely reduced to Teacher-Centered and Subject-Centered learning. Such conditions limit children’s choices and restrict support and encouragement based on their own needs and requirements” [12, p. 31].

Table 1

Research on preschool education and school preparation in Mongolia

Year	Authors	Title	Impressum
2010	Bezborodova L.A. Enkhzhargal G.	Trends in the development of primary education in Mongolia	Teacher XXI century. 2010. № 3-1. pp. 96–99
2013	Popova L. D.	The peculiarities of supplementary education in preschool institutions of Mongolia	Scientific Notes of Zabaikalsky State University. 2013. № 5 (52). pp. 12–18
2014	Bariushanov N.	Professional competence of teachers in creating an innovative educational environment in the elementary grades in schools in Mongolia	Teacher XXI century. 2014. № 4-1. pp. 187–191
2015	Popova L.D.	Regulatory aspect of the organization of additional education of children in preschool educational institutions of Russia and Mongolia	Preschool education in today's changing world: theory and practice: III International. Scientific-practical conference: a collection of articles, Chita, November 27, 2014. Edited by A.I. Ulzytueva. Chita: Zabaykalskyi gos. un, 2015. pp. 130–134
	Delgersaikhan Ts.	Preschool and primary education in Mongolia: current status and prospects	Actual problems of primary general education: theory and practice. International, scientific and practical conf. Ed. by I.A. Shkabur. A. Shkabur. Chita: Zabaykalsky State University, 2015. pp. 28–34
2015	Delgersaikhan Ts.	On some questions regarding the sequence of training programs on social sciences of preschool and primary general education	Actual problems of primary general education: theory and practice. International, scientific and practical conf. Ed. by I.A. Shbura. A. Shkabur. Chita: Zabaykalsky State University, 2015. pp. 128–133
	Javzandulam Batsaikhan	Play-based curriculum in early childhood education in Mongolia	Eurasian Paradigm of Russia: Values, Ideas, Practice: Mat. of the international scientific conference devoted to the 20th anniversary of Buryat State University. Scientific ed. V. Bashkeeva, M.V. Badmaeva. Ulan-Ude: Buryat. State University, 2015. pp. 172–175
2016	Batdelger J., Erdenchimeg C.	Further tasks and services for pre-primary education in Mongolia in modern market conditions	Preschool Education in the Modern Changing World: Theory and Practice: IV International Scientific-Practical Conference: collected articles. Transbaikal State University; ed. by A. I. Ulzytueva. Chita: ZabGU, 2016. pp. 17–23
	Bayarjargal B.	To the question of assessing preschool education in Mongolia	Preschool Education in the Modern Changing World: Theory and Practice: IV International Scientific-Practical Conference: collected articles. Transbaikal State University; ed. by A.I. Ulzytueva. Chita: ZabGU, 2016. pp. 24–28
	Gereltuyaa T., Menhtuul Z.	The analysis of curricula of the higher educational institutions of Mongolia training tutors of preschool educational institutions	Preschool Education in the Modern Changing World: Theory and Practice: IV International Scientific-Practical Conference: collected articles. Transbaikal State University; ed. by A.I. Ulzytueva. Chita: ZabGU, 2016. pp. 65–69
2017	Bariushanov Nomin	comparative analysis of primary school main educational programs in Russia and Mongolia	Secondary vocational education. 2017. № 8. pp. 18–20
	Tatiana Budaeva, Sergey Namsaraev	On the peculiarities of the preschool and general education of Mongolia	Baltic humanities journal. 2017. T. 6. № 4 (21). pp. 266–268

End of Table 1

Year	Authors	Title	Impressum
2020	Tserennadmid Shagdarsuren Tserennadmid Shagdarsuren, Ariunbold Adiya Ariunbold Adiya	Analysis of the result of the integrated steam approach in preschool education in Mongolia	Preschool education in the modern changing world: theory and practice: Mat. VI Intern. nauch.-prakt. conf. In 2 p., Chita, November 27–26, 2020. Chita: Zabaikalye State University, 2020. pp. 227–231
2021	Galiya Vakhitova, Eduard Leontyev, Azhrakhguy Batsuuri	The current state of preschool education in Russia and Mongolia	Scientific and Pedagogical Review. 2021. № 3 (37). pp. 162–171

By analyzing the main aspects of scientific publications, it is possible to identify trends that determine the development vector of Mongolian preschool education:

1. Preschool institutions are designed to provide education based on the main national principle of “Traditional Mongolian Education.” When children acquire knowledge and form their character through certain activities” [9], this principle is logical and consistent with the goal of the Mongolian national education program, which aims to introduce children to the national way of life at an early age (animal husbandry, nomadic household management, folk tanning, sewing).

3. In the last decade, the child-centered approach (CCA) has been introduced in almost all Mongolian preschool institutions. The main goal of this approach is to promote the development of children’s future skills in a globalized world where traditional education is transforming into alternative education. Traditional learning refers to knowledge or content-based and structured practices that have prevailed since the socialist era. On the other hand, the new child-centered approach promotes children’s initiative, self-esteem, independence, and creative thinking [13, p. 63]. This approach was formalized by the Mongolian state national program “The Right Mongolian Child” (2012–2016).

4. Since 2017, after the adoption of the decree “Education Policy (2014–2024)”, the main objectives of the new concept of the Mongolian education system, “Development of every child,” were defined. The new concept served as a basic normative document for developing and implementing a new basic program called the Core Program of Preschool Education in Mongolia. This program aims to develop every child, regardless of the place of residence (city – village – settlement), create a favorable educational environment for the development of children’s individual abilities, and promote their independence [14, p. 160]. Let us emphasize the importance of the method of child-friendly assessment included in this program. It is an assessment criterion for the dynamics of children’s physical development, mastery of language, and thinking; from our point of view, important criteria consistent with the age characteristics of preschool children, creative abilities (the ability to dance, sing, play musical instruments, draw).

Overall, a content analysis of preschool education in Mongolia revealed several characteristics or semantic constructs:

1. A qualitative reform of education in Mongolia (especially preschool education): the emergence of a new ideology of education and learning;

2. The incompleteness of the legal framework for preschool education in Mongolia. This affects the coordination of actors to improve the quality and accessibility of services to all segments of the population;

3. The peculiarities of the organization of additional education in preschool institutions, including the development of alternative forms of preschool education;

4. The attempt to implement various concepts, technologies, and programs at the state level to ensure the transition from traditional forms to playful forms in the field of preschool education (State National Program of Mongolia “Right Mongolian Child” (2012–2016), the Normative Law of the Mongolian Government “Education Policy (2014–2024)”, the Law on Provision of Services in the Field of Preschool Education (2014–2024), Mongolian Government Law “On Education of Mongolian Children” (2012–2016), Mongolian Government Law on Child Care Services (2015), Mongolian Education System Concept “Development of Each Child” (2014), Core Program for Preschool Education (2014–2015), Home School Preparation Program (2017–2019), STEAM Play Program under Mongol Ail Project (2019));

5. Developing an evaluation system for preschool education in line with international trends (program to implement the new evaluation method “Child friendly”);

6. Building preschool education as a complete and integral part of the state system of general education in Mongolia.

To the features we have highlighted, we must add those that can be described as purely negative:

1. The influence of globalization on the Mongolian education system, including preschool education. This manifests itself in “the desire of the West to impose its views and beliefs on all non-Western cultural and historical types as the only true and authentic ones” [15, p. 65]. As a result, Mongolia “cannot find an appropriate strategy for the development of the education system by announcing something new every year” (concepts, programs, projects) [16, p. 214]. In addition, the researchers note that it is easier for ministries and education departments to copy the education policies of highly developed countries than to develop their own Mongolian strategies in education that take into account Mongolian characteristics, especially the traditional nomadic way of life “with a stable tradition to educate the rising generation with an ecological future orientation” [17, p. 32].

2. The introduction of non-traditional religions for Mongolians (Islam, Munism, Protestantism) and their various branches and currents negatively affect the development of children, especially their worldview and mentality (Nyamaa Tsogzolmaa, Navaanzoch H. Tzedev). Researchers at the Pedagogical Institute of the Mongolian State University of Education (Mongol Ulsyn Bolosrolyn Ikh Surguul) and the Mongolian National University (Mongol Ulsyn Ikh Surguul) refer to this influence as Real Religious Violence.

Given the significant differences in the forms of organization of preschool education in Russia and Mongolia, it is important also to note significant differences in the organization of the educational process of preschool education based on the concept of the Federal Educational Standards of Preschool Education (Russia) and the Core Curriculum of Preschool Education (Mongolia) (Table 2).

According to World Bank research, between 2017 and 2019, 35–40% of Mongolian preschool-aged children attended public preschool institutions, while 9–10% participated in alternative forms of preschool education: seasonal preschools, tent camps, mobile preschools, hourly preschool centers. This clearly indicates that 50% of Mongolian preschool children do not have access to adequate preschool education that enables them to transition to elementary school successfully. Therefore, a home-based school preparation program (2017–2019) was implemented in four aimaks in Mongolia. The program was funded and directly implemented by Save the Children Japan (SCJ) and targeted Mongolia’s socioeconomically poor communities and pastoralist children who do not have access to preschool education.

A comparative analysis of the current state of preschool education in Russia and Mongolia shows that both systems prioritize children’s needs and age-related abilities and give them the right to choose educational institutions, programs, forms of activities, and teaching and learning methods.

Table 2

Features of preschool education in Russia and Mongolia

Features of the educational process	Russian (under the Federal Educational Standard of Preschool Education)	Mongolian (under the “Development of Each Child” + Core Curriculum of Preschool Education)
Children’s age	5–6 years	5 years
Forms of implementation of preschool education	Preschool groups in kindergartens, school-preparatory groups based on general educational institutions, additional educational centers, family education	Kindergarten-Yurt, Visiting Teachers, hourly preschool institutions
Priorities	Development of universal values	Development of student’ future competencies (in the context of the traditional Mongolian value system)
Goal	Ensure continuity and succession of education by creating a single educational space for preschool and primary school children	Formation of the personality (compulsory training of skills typical of the nomadic way of life)
Dominant component	Learning, development, and education in a diversified environment	Teaching focused on children’s development (with minimal support from adults: no joint problem solving, no suggestion of an alternative)
Orientation of the educational process	Personal (taking into account the individual characteristics of children)	Personal (primarily to an average child)
Attitudes of the participants	Teachers and children – are the subjects of the process, direct interaction of teachers and children in a joint activity	A teacher is the subject of the process; a child is the object of the teacher’s pedagogical influences and the executor of the teacher’s plans
Activities of adults and children	Participants in joint activities. Teachers see children as equal partners and respect their aspirations and individuality	Teachers assume the position of mentor, and children assume the position of learner. Teachers see children as objects of influence and try to draw boundaries between themselves and children
Main activity	Child-specific activities	Some elements of activities for children that focus on learning
Mandatory participation of children	Desirable, but not mandatory. The choice to cooperate with the teacher or engage in other activities	Mandatory for all children
The motivation of the child	The natural interest of the child.	The authority of the teacher
The behavioral style of the teacher	Democratic (children are contributors and interlocutors)	Instructive (children are subordinate and dependent on the teacher).
Child behavior	Creative and cognitive activity	Creative (but also: disciplined, responsible, diligent)
Model of process organization.	Joint activities of teachers and children	Classroom system of teaching
The basis of the educational content	Activity	Instruction
Principle of organization of educational content	Semantic	Subject oriented
Principles for content delivery	Integration. Content is socially and personally meaningful to preschool children and is implemented in various types of children’s activities	Differentiation. Content is divided into academic subjects as an analogy to school subjects: the surrounding world, mathematical concepts, language development, drawing, modeling, appliqué, physical education, singing, housekeeping, etc.

End of Table 2

Features of the educational process	Russian (under the Federal Educational Standard of Preschool Education)	Mongolian (under the “Development of Each Child” + Core Curriculum of Preschool Education)
Means for the implementation of the educational content	Pedagogical technologies as a sequence of teachers’ actions aimed at the creativity of all those involved in the process	Regulatory framework for precise implementation
Methods for the implementation of the educational content	Playful, exploratory, practical	Reproduction methods
The nature of education	The development of motivation and goal setting	Natural learning Iteration, imitation, copying according to a pattern, algorithmic procedure
Forms of teaching	Independent forms of joint and independent activities for children (games, conversations, observations, book reading, problem solving, exploration)	A lesson with elements of play, conversation, and observation. The traditional form of teaching
Degree of regulation	Low. Flexible regulation. Choice possibilities. They encourage teachers’ creativity in making plans, taking into account children’s needs and interests	Very high: strictly regulated time, content, and forms
Organization of the space.	Joint activities of teachers and children. Free movement in the activity space (asking, advising, agreeing, handing out)	Teachers are always above and in front of the children – i.e., they occupy what is called the Teacher’s Seat. They come in as needed to help the children, supervise them, and evaluate their work. The children move around the room very little for discipline and performance reasons
Results	In accordance with the requirements of the Federal Educational Standards of preschool education, preparing children for further development	Under the requirements of the concept of Development of Each Child (professional and personal)
Monitoring and evaluation	Assessment of the dynamics of children’s skill development. Routine evaluation sheets, tests, monitoring	Evaluation of each task that children complete in the development of knowledge, skills, and competencies, with the expansion of the list of children’s skills. Tests, quizzes, self-study

In highlighting the main problems and prospects, it should be noted that the system of preschool education in Mongolia’s preschool and general education institutions is at a developmental stage. At the same time, Russia has enough experience to enrich the education system. Despite this fact, the Russian educational system can consider the positive aspects of the development of preschool children in Mongolia, which are related to the need and importance of implementing the principles of traditional Mongolian education.

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