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Promoting Self-Reliance Education through Child Participation Rights for 3-4 Year-Olds

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Abstract: The approach of child participation is a significant perspective for fostering self-reliance education, grounded in the trust teachers place in children. This approach empowers children, creating favorable conditions for decision-making and choice. Investigation into the current status of self-reliance education for 3-4 year-olds in several preschools within Hanoi reveals that children's self-reliance predominantly resides at a moderately developed level. These findings are influenced by several factors, notably the teacher's flexibility and creativity in tailoring appropriate approaches – including objectives, content, methods, forms, and interventions – to each child's individuality and the practical conditions of the school and local context. This study proposes eight self-reliance education strategies for 3-4 year-olds based on the child participation rights approach. These strategies are aligned with the characteristics of children aged 3-4, ensuring target-oriented, systematic, developmental, feasible, practical, and age-appropriate methods, as well as organizing playful and educational activities within preschool settings.

Keywords: Preschool children; self-reliance; child participation; approach rights.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Children aged 3-4 have the ability and necessity to undertake activities serving their own needs and expressing themselves in ways suitable for their age. However, in reality, their self-reliance is limited due to various reasons, many of which pertain to educational methods. By establishing educational strategies that promote self-reliance in 3-4 year-olds, involving opportunities for children to participate in activities, organizing respectful activities that grant them the power to choose and decide according to their abilities, needs, and preferences, their self-reliance will be nurtured and enhanced.

As society continues to develop, ensuring human rights, including those of children, is gaining more attention and enforcement. Education grounded in child participation rights is a humane approach, emphasizing the significance of children's rights, particularly in the current era. This approach demands that educators comprehend and respect children's rights throughout the caregiving and educational processes. In practice, however, preschool teachers have limited understanding of child participation rights. The instructional resources for self-reliance education, generally and specifically for children, are lacking,

particularly regarding the STG-based (presumably Steiner Education) self-reliance education for 3-4 year-olds. Thus, there is a need for scientific research and specific guidance regarding self-reliance education for preschool children, especially those aged 3-4, rooted in the child participation rights approach.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The self-reliance of 3-4 year-old children is understood as a combination of individual psychological characteristics manifested in their ability for independence, self-service in daily activities, and the execution of simple tasks without depending on others. They possess the capacity to make decisions and choices independently, suggesting appropriate ways to play and engage in age-appropriate learning activities.

Research into education based on the child participation approach consistently highlights happiness, positivity, and mutual trust between educators and children. Interaction and content selection by educators are based on respect, listening, and sharing with children. An education environment grounded in child participation is a place ready to embrace activities initiated by children. Educators play a significant role in

observing and supporting children's capacity development.

The involvement of young children in the preschool education environment, as suggested by Venninen (2014), is a multidimensional issue, where key factors include happiness and positive capabilities. Berthelsen, Brownlee, and Johansson (2009) focus on the role of participation and child participation rights in early childhood education. Their work explores how children engage in the learning process and provides methods and strategies for educators to support and encourage active child participation in knowledge construction and holistic development.

Shier's (2000) model of supporting child participation suggests that educators should listen to and support children's viewpoints, even when a shared language doesn't exist or communication is complex. This might mean that non-verbal children can express their ideas through body language and other non-linguistic communication, such as images or signs. Child participation is also related to pedagogical choices and interactions between adults and children. The "scaffolding approach," considering learning as a positive process where educators assist children, has been applied in Finnish preschools (Venninen, 2014) as a practical method to listen to children's opinions and provide opportunities to understand their perspectives.

Tahkokallio (2014) suggests that educators should observe and reflect on children's experiences. Child participation in the preschool education environment can also be seen as a collective activity for explaining and sharing experiences with peers and educators.

Christine Pascal, Tony Bertram (2005), and John Dewey (1859-1952) discuss a research and practice approach centered around listening to and supporting children's perspectives, even when a shared language doesn't exist or communication is complex. This issue is raised to encourage educators, researchers, and professionals working with children to master methods of listening and better understand the viewpoints and emotions of children in the process of research and education. This means that non-verbal children can express their ideas through body language and other non-linguistic communication, such as images or signs.

Vygotsky (1978) focuses on the role of socialization of knowledge and social interaction in children's cognitive development. Vygotsky posits that cognition and knowledge are not solely formed through individual processes but are also socialized through interaction with those around them and the social environment. Jerome Bruner (1990) proposed the idea of learning through social interaction and constructing knowledge from real experiences. In a socially interactive environment, children learn from adults,

exchange knowledge, and collaboratively build knowledge. Knowledge construction doesn't just come from abstract information perception, but also from experiencing real situations. Children learn and comprehend by participating in real activities, exploring their surroundings, and experiencing everyday life situations. During these experiences, instead of passively transmitting knowledge, educators should create opportunities for children to engage in activities and experiences, thereby facilitating active learning and understanding.

In summary, research on child education based on the child participation approach focuses on evaluating and capturing the role of children in the learning process, emphasizing that children are not just recipients of information but active participants in learning and exploration. The child participation approach allows children to build knowledge through participating in experiential activities and interacting with their environment. Furthermore, these studies assert that fostering self-reliance through the child participation approach is a process that safeguards children's rights. Child education based on the child participation approach promotes learning through hands-on activities and real experiences. Instead of solely focusing on transmitting abstract knowledge, this method encourages children to engage in practical activities to comprehend and construct knowledge. Social activities and interactions play a crucial role in developing children's language, social skills, and problem-solving abilities. They create an environment of positive and diverse learning, where children can interact, explore, and naturally and actively learn.

Research on Self-Reliance Education Based on the Participation Approach

Research by Ferholt and Korfer (2012) focuses on applying the participation approach in early childhood education in Denmark. The authors emphasize creating a diverse and positive learning environment that allows children to freely explore and express their own ideas through play activities. The study's results demonstrate that active participation of children in the learning process enhances their self-reliance and development. Sloat and Thiessen (2014) have shown that establishing a diverse learning environment and encouraging active engagement in play activities has facilitated the development of self-reliance skills and enhanced curiosity and creativity among children in Canada. Kim and Lee (2019) highlight that children's active engagement in learning activities has contributed to the development of self-reliance and confidence in expressing their opinions.

Sheridan and Jonna Kangas (2001) propose that child-initiated activities are part of the participation process, wherein the role of educators is to create conditions for participation and support, as well as to cultivate an environment ready to embrace child-initiated

activities. Participation necessitates interaction between children and educators within a learning environment. In this process, educators play a crucial role in observation and support for capacity development. Trust between children and educators forms the basis for participation issues. Children communicate more effectively with adults they trust and have positive relationships with. When applying participatory learning methods, Berthelsen (2009) asserts that children's participation should not be viewed as a static state but as a dynamic, continually evolving environment where each individual influences society. This requires evaluating children's engagement and participatory experiences through the learning and developmental process. Skills related to participation, such as negotiation, taking turns, and sharing both resources and ideas, need to be developed through practice and repetitive experiences. With these skills, children can achieve better learning outcomes.

In Taylor's (1964) study on preschool education, it was found that children can achieve self-reliance when guided by teachers through activities in their daily routines. These daily routine activities can focus on developing children's self-reliance skills, such as washing hands before meals, taking off shoes, and removing coats. Self-reliance can also be nurtured by giving children the confidence to perform tasks themselves and teaching them a sense of responsibility for their actions. The viewpoints of Sonia Blandford and Catherine Knowles (2011) emphasize creating a classroom where children engage in meaningful learning experiences that matter to themselves and their peers, with strategies tailored to meet their individual learning needs. Consequently, educators must establish a safe environment that allows children to comfortably participate in their activities. Involving children in decision-making processes and enabling them to plan are vital guidelines for educators in this research.

Expressions of Self-Reliance in 3-4 Year-Old Children

Expressions of self-reliance in 3-4 year-old children encompass behaviors, skills, abilities, and attitudes demonstrated during play, learning, interactions, and daily self-care activities. In some aspects, there is a resemblance between the characteristics and expressions of self-reliance. Gravatt (2006) asserts that a self-reliant child consistently exhibits strong self-confidence and rarely depends on others. Specific expressions of children's self-reliance include the ability to work alone, think independently, express their ideas clearly, and take responsibility for their actions.

Sri Wahyuni and colleagues (2020) define expressions of a child's independence through indicators such as physical abilities, self-confidence, responsibility, discipline, social interactions, sharing, and emotional control. Indicators of physical abilities include the child's ability to take care of their hygiene, brush their teeth, put on their shoes, and feed themselves. Indicators of self-

confidence involve the child completing tasks independently, asking questions when unsure, being comfortable attending school alone, and being able to wait alone (e.g., in cases of being picked up late). Indicators of discipline encompass punctuality, proper disposal of trash, adherence to school rules, and maintaining attentiveness during lessons. Social interaction indicators include sharing and cooperating with others. Emotional control indicators involve the child not yelling when scolded, not crying when they want something, not becoming angry when teased, and not shouting when bothered by others.

According to Dewanggi (2015), expressions of self-reliance include the child's ability to eat and live healthily. The child's ability to eat independently comprises washing hands, using utensils like knives and forks, and eating without assistance. For children whose mothers work as laborers, these tasks need to be performed daily without any help, as their parents have to work long hours. Therefore, these children indirectly develop self-reliance, not only learning to eat but also becoming skilled in bathing, dressing, and going to school independently.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a survey questionnaire administered to preschool teachers and parents of children aged 3-4 in the Hanoi city area, focusing on research-related topics. The research investigates the current state of fostering independence in education, the degree of independence exhibited by 3-4 year-old children, and the factors influencing the cultivation of independence in this age group. The study is based on a participatory approach. Observations and notes are taken on daily activities of children both at the preschool (MN) and at home, aiming to assess the impact of school and family environments on children. This assessment involves evaluating the behaviors, attitudes, self-expression, and autonomy of the children during these activities. Information is collected through observing the adults (parents, caregivers, guardians) engaged in activities that promote independence in children, as well as noting the instances of children's independence in various activities. The study also observes how children's independence changes in response to different influences.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1. Status of Implementing the Method of Fostering Children's Independence Education Based on Participatory Approach

To assess the current status of implementing methods for fostering children's independence education using a participatory approach, we designed a questionnaire consisting of two main sections. These sections included an evaluation of the frequency of implementing education methods comprising 6 items: Verbal method; Practical and experiential method; Modeling method; Mirror method; Visual method;

Practice and evaluation method. Additionally, the questionnaire assessed the frequency of implementing educational activities comprising 13 items: During child drop-off and morning exercise; At the start of the school day; During outdoor playtime; During activities at various learning corners; During mealtime; During naptime; During hygiene routines; During afternoon playtime; During child pickup; During learning activities; During artistic performances; During field trips and experiential activities; During project activities.

Among the 6 education methods presented, the most frequently implemented method, ranking first with an average score of 4.4 (Ranked 1st), is the Verbal method with an average score of 4.4/5. Following this, the statistical results indicate that the very frequent implementation is evaluated at 43.10%, with no opinions evaluating it as rarely implemented.

Ranked 2nd is the Practical and experiential method, evaluated as being very frequently implemented with an average score of 4.2/5. The highest focus within this method lies in the evaluation of the teachers' very frequent implementation, reaching 60.2%. This is followed by an evaluation concentrating on the very frequent implementation, reaching 32%, with no opinions stating that it is never implemented.

Ranked 3rd is the Practice and evaluation method, very frequently implemented with an average score of 4.2/5. The highest focus within this method lies in the evaluation of the teachers' very frequent

implementation, reaching 54.10%. This is followed by an evaluation concentrating on the very frequent implementation, reaching 30.90%, with no opinions stating that it is never implemented.

Ranked 4th is the Modeling method, very frequently implemented with an average score of 4.1/5. The highest focus within this method lies in the evaluation of the teachers' very frequent implementation, reaching 56.40%. This is followed by an evaluation concentrating on the very frequent implementation, reaching 26.50%, with no opinions stating that it is never implemented.

Ranked 5th is the Mirror method, very frequently implemented with an average score of 4.0/5. The highest focus within this method lies in the evaluation of the teachers' very frequent implementation, reaching 51.90%. This is followed by an evaluation concentrating on the very frequent implementation, reaching 23.20%, with no opinions stating that it is never implemented.

Ranked 6th is the Visual method, very frequently implemented with an average score of 4.01/5. The highest focus within this method lies in the evaluation of the teachers' very frequent implementation, reaching 48.60%. This is followed by an evaluation concentrating on the very frequent implementation, reaching 23.80%, with no opinions stating that it is never implemented.

Table 1: Evaluation of the frequency of implementing methods for fostering independence education in 3-4 year-old children based on the participatory approach.

No	Educational methods	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequent	Very often	\bar{x}	SD	Numerical
1	The method of using words	0.00	0.00	5.50	51.40	43.10	4.4	0.59	1
2	Methods of practice, experience	0.00	0.00	7.70	60.20	32.00	4.2	0.58	2
3	Modeling method	0.00	0.00	17.10	56.40	26.50	4.1	0.66	4
4	Example method	0.00	0.00	24.90	51.90	23.20	4.0	0.69	5
5	Intuitive method	0.00	0.00	27.60	48.60	23.80	4.01	0.72	6
6	Practice Method	0.00	0.60	14.40	54.10	30.90	4.2	0.67	3

Unit of measurement: Percentage (%) of respondents in the survey.

4.2. Status of Implementing Activities for Fostering Independence Education in 3-4 Year-Old Children Based on Participatory Approach

Ranking first (Rank 1) with an average score of 4.4/5 are the education activities during child drop-off and morning exercise. The highest evaluated frequency is the very frequent implementation, reaching a rate of 48.6%, followed by the evaluation of frequent implementation at 45.9%. There are no opinions evaluating it as infrequently implemented.

Ranking second with an average score of 4.4/5 are the education activities during mealtime. The highest evaluated frequency is the very frequent implementation,

reaching a rate of 42.00%, followed by the evaluation of frequent implementation at 47.00%. There are no opinions evaluating it as infrequently implemented.

Ranking eleventh with an average score of 3.3/5 are the education activities during project activities. The highest evaluated frequency is the frequent implementation, reaching a rate of 27.40%, followed by the evaluation of very frequent implementation at 14.50%. There are opinions (6.70%) evaluating it as infrequently implemented.

Ranking twelfth with an average score of 3.2/5 are the education activities during artistic performances.

The highest evaluated frequency is the frequent implementation, reaching a rate of 20.00%, followed by the evaluation of very frequent implementation at 7.80%. There are opinions (3.90%) evaluating it as infrequently implemented.

Ranking thirteenth with an average score of 3.1/5 are the education activities during field trips and experiential activities. The highest evaluated frequency is the frequent implementation, reaching a rate of 21.50%, followed by the evaluation of very frequent implementation at 5.50%. There are opinions (5.00%) evaluating it as infrequently implemented.

4.3. Proposed Solutions for Fostering Independence Education in 3-4 Year-Old Children through the Participatory Approach.

Solution 1: Observe and understand the child's interests, desires, and level of independence development to determine appropriate goals and activity content for the child.

Solution 2: Create specific plans and organize activities based on the child's living context at both the preschool and family environments.

Solution 3: Establish a safe and comfortable educational environment that promotes the child's participation in activities.

Solution 4: Empower children to make choices and initiate activities in their daily routines, such as self-service, play, and learning activities.

Solution 5: Provide opportunities for children to engage with peers and groups in various activities.

Solution 6: Implement a variety of independence education activities, enhance project-based activities and experiences at preschool.

Solution 7: Encourage and inspire children to have confidence in expressing their abilities. Solution 8: Collaborate and unify efforts with families to understand, trust, and provide suitable support according to the child's level of independence development.

CONCLUSION

Independence is an essential trait for human beings in general, and specifically for children aged 3-4. It signifies a child's ability to be self-reliant in serving, adapting to groups, making choices, taking autonomous actions, and striving towards their set goals. The age of 3-4 is a critical phase marked by significant psychological transitions and the emergence of signs of independence. Fostering independence education in children aged 3-4 has a profound impact on their character development and overall growth.

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