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METHODS OF IDENTIFYING AND DEVELOPING THE CAREER INTERESTS OF PUPILS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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Abstract. The thesis considers the methods of identifying and developing the career interests of junior schoolchildren. The diagnostic instruments appropriate for the age of seven to eleven are described, and the pedagogical ways of developing a stable interest in the world of work through lesson and extracurricular activity are substantiated.

Key words: primary education, career interest, diagnostics, projective technique, role-play, propaedeutic career guidance.

Interest is the psychological mechanism through which a child's attention is directed towards a certain sphere of reality and is retained there long enough for knowledge and skills to accumulate. In the primary school the career interest is still diffuse and situational: it arises under the impression of a bright event, a film or a conversation with an adult and may change several times in the course of a year. Precisely for this reason it cannot be measured with the instruments designed for adolescents, and its diagnosis requires methods adapted to the visual and imaginative thinking of the junior schoolchild.

The first group of methods is observation. The teacher records which tasks the pupil performs with pleasure, which roles the child chooses in play, which objects and instruments attract attention, how long the child is able to remain concentrated on a practical task. Observation is carried out systematically and is fixed in a simple map of interests, which makes it possible to distinguish a stable preference from a momentary enthusiasm.

The second group consists of projective techniques. The drawing "I at work in the future", followed by a short interview about the drawing, reveals not only the named occupation but also the motive behind it — the wish to help people, to manage machines, to create beautiful things. The incomplete sentence technique ("I would like to learn how to …", "The most interesting work is …") works in the same way. Such methods are valuable because the child is not required to formulate an explicit self-assessment.

The third group comprises adapted questionnaires. For junior classes the pictorial modification of E. A. Klimov's classification is convenient: the pupil chooses between paired images of activities, and the answers are grouped into five spheres — "human–nature", "human–technology", "human–human", "human–sign systems" and "human–artistic image". A supplementary source of information is a questionnaire for parents, since the family environment largely determines the child's first occupational impressions. The principal diagnostic instruments are summarised in the table.

Diagnostic methods of studying the career interests of junior schoolchildren

Method	Content	Grade	Result
Structured observation	Map of the pupil's preferences in lessons, labour tasks and play	1–4	Stability of interest
Drawing "I at work in the future"	Drawing with a subsequent interview about its content	2–4	Image of the occupation and its motive
Incomplete sentences	Ten beginnings of sentences about work and skills	3–4	Value-related attitudes
Pictorial questionnaire	Twenty paired images of	3–4	Dominant sphere

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Method	Content	Grade	Result
(after E. A. Klimov)	activities to choose from		of interest
Questionnaire for parents	Questions about the child's home occupations and hobbies	1–4	Interests outside school

Diagnosis, however, is only the starting point. The development of career interests is achieved by pedagogical means, among which four have proved the most effective in our practice. Enrichment of the content of lessons: the material of reading, mathematics, natural science and technology allows occupational information to be introduced without additional teaching hours — through applied problems, texts about working people and the vocabulary of occupations. Direct encounter with labour: excursions to enterprises of the district, meetings with parents of different occupations, and virtual tours of modern production facilities, which are especially important for a rural school. Role-play and project activity: the games "The town of masters" and "A day in the occupation", the collective project "The atlas of the occupations of my village", in which the child "inhabits" the occupational role and correlates it with his or her own abilities. Finally, practical labour tasks, in which interest is supported by a visible result of one's own effort.

Two conditions deserve special attention. The first is the deliberate broadening of the occupational field: children spontaneously name six to ten occupations from their immediate environment, therefore the teacher's task is to show the occupations of the digital economy, ecology, engineering and services. The second is the neutralisation of gender stereotypes, which, according to developmental research, become entrenched as early as the age of seven and exclude whole groups of occupations from the range of the personally acceptable.

Conclusion. The identification of career interests in the primary school requires a combination of observation, projective techniques and adapted pictorial questionnaires, while their development requires the systematic enrichment of lessons with occupational content, direct contact with the world of work, play and project activity. Used together, these methods turn a situational childhood enthusiasm into a stable cognitive interest, which subsequently becomes the basis of a conscious occupational choice.

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