THE ROLE OF PARENTAL PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE IN SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S COGNITIVE AND SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23108716

Abstract

This thesis examines the role of parental pedagogical competence in supporting children's cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional development. Parental competence is considered a multidimensional construct that includes knowledge of child development, effective communication skills, positive discipline, the ability to organize developmentally appropriate activities, and reflective parenting practices. The study analyzes pedagogical approaches that can be used to strengthen parental competence and improve the quality of parent–child interaction. Particular attention is paid to responsive caregiving, shared reading, learning through play, emotional support, and constructive communication. The analysis indicates that systematic parental education should combine theoretical knowledge with practical exercises, feedback, and reflection. Such an approach may contribute to the creation of a supportive home learning environment and strengthen cooperation between families and educational institutions.

Keywords: parental competence, child development, family education, cognitive development, socio-emotional development, responsive caregiving, positive parenting, home learning environment.

Introduction

The family is the first social and educational environment in which a child begins to acquire fundamental knowledge, behavioral patterns, communication skills, values, and attitudes. Long before formal education begins, children learn through observation, imitation, communication, play, and daily interaction with parents and other family members. Therefore, the quality of the home environment represents an important component of children's overall development.Contemporary approaches to education increasingly emphasize the active role of parents in supporting children's learning and development. Parenting cannot be limited to meeting children's physical needs or controlling their behavior. Parents also need to understand developmental characteristics, recognize individual differences, provide emotional support, organize age-appropriate activities, and create opportunities for independent exploration.Parental pedagogical competence can be understood as an integrated combination of knowledge, practical skills, attitudes, communication abilities, and reflective capacities that enable parents to organize child-rearing practices in accordance with children's developmental needs [1, 3]. This competence allows parents to respond more appropriately to everyday educational situations and to transform ordinary family activities into opportunities for learning and development.The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the pedagogical significance of parental competence and to identify effective methods for developing parental knowledge and practical skills that support children's cognitive and socio-emotional development.

Relevance of the Topic

The relevance of parental pedagogical competence has increased considerably in contemporary society. Changes in family lifestyles, increased parental workload, widespread access to digital technologies, and the growing influence of online information have created new challenges for family education.Parents are frequently required to make decisions concerning children's screen use, learning activities, behavioral difficulties, emotional reactions, communication, and social relationships. Such situations require more than general parenting experience; they also require an understanding of child

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development and the ability to select appropriate educational strategies.Scientific evidence supports the importance of parent-focused interventions. A global systematic review and meta-analysis by Jeong et al. included 102 randomized controlled trials and found beneficial effects of parenting interventions on several domains of early child development, including cognitive, language, motor, and socio-emotional outcomes [6]. These findings demonstrate that improving parenting practices can contribute to measurable developmental outcomes.The World Health Organization also emphasizes responsive caregiving and opportunities for early learning as important components of early childhood development [8]. Responsive caregiving requires parents and caregivers to observe children's signals, interpret them appropriately, and respond consistently and sensitively.Consequently, developing parental pedagogical competence is relevant not only for improving family education but also for strengthening continuity between home and institutional educational environments.

Methods

The study was based on theoretical analysis, comparison, synthesis, generalization, and pedagogical modeling. National literature on family pedagogy and social education was examined together with international systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and recommendations concerning parenting and early childhood development.

Four interrelated components of parental pedagogical competence were identified.The cognitive component includes knowledge about children's age-related development, individual characteristics, educational needs, and principles of effective parenting.The communicative component includes active listening, age-appropriate explanation, constructive dialogue, emotional responsiveness, and respectful parent–child interaction.The practical component involves the ability to organize play, shared reading, creative activities, everyday learning experiences, and developmentally appropriate responsibilities.The reflective component refers to parents' ability to evaluate their own parenting practices, identify ineffective strategies, and modify their behavior when necessary.Based on these components, the following methodological sequence was considered appropriate for parental education:

initial assessment → pedagogical education → demonstration of practical strategies → guided practice → feedback → application at home → monitoring and reflection.

Results

The theoretical analysis demonstrated that parental pedagogical competence should not be reduced to the amount of information parents possess about child-rearing. Knowledge becomes educationally meaningful when parents are able to apply it appropriately in real interactions with their children.One important area is the development of responsive parent–child communication. When parents listen attentively, respond to children's questions, expand their statements, encourage them to explain their ideas, and involve them in dialogue, everyday communication becomes an important learning mechanism.Language development is particularly closely connected with interaction in the home environment. A systematic review and meta-analysis by Roberts et al. examined 76 studies involving 5,848 participants and reported that parent-training interventions were associated with improvements in children's language-related outcomes and parents' use of language-support strategies [7]. Therefore, shared reading, storytelling, asking open-ended questions, and discussing daily experiences can be incorporated into parental pedagogical training.Another important result concerns learning through everyday activities. Development does not require that every educational activity be organized as a formal lesson. For example, parents can develop early mathematical concepts while preparing food, vocabulary during walks, reasoning through conversations about stories, and responsibility through age-appropriate household tasks.The analysis also identified emotional responsiveness as a significant component of parental competence. Parents should be able to recognize children's emotional states, help them name emotions, establish understandable behavioral boundaries, and respond to undesirable behavior without humiliation or excessive punishment. Such practices create conditions for the development of emotional regulation and constructive social behavior.

On this basis, parental pedagogical competence can be represented through the following functional model:

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knowledge of child development → appropriate parent–child interaction → developmentally supportive activity → observation of the child's response → parental reflection → adjustment of educational strategies.

This model demonstrates that parental competence is dynamic rather than static. Parents continually evaluate children's changing needs and adapt their educational behavior accordingly.

Conclusion

Parental pedagogical competence represents an important resource for supporting children's cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and personal development. Its content extends beyond theoretical knowledge and includes communication skills, responsive interaction, positive educational strategies, organization of developmentally appropriate activities, and reflective parenting.The analysis indicates that programs aimed at improving parental competence should combine pedagogical information with practical training. Workshops, modeling of parent–child interactions, analysis of educational situations, shared parent–child activities, individual consultation, home-based tasks, and structured feedback can be integrated into a comprehensive methodology.An important principle is to help parents recognize the developmental potential of everyday family life. Conversation, play, shared reading, household activities, and joint problem-solving can become effective educational opportunities when parents understand how to use them purposefully.Therefore, systematic development of parental pedagogical competence can contribute to creating a more supportive home learning environment and strengthening cooperation between families and educational institutions. Future empirical research should assess these interventions using standardized measures of parental competence and children's developmental outcomes.

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