

**SCIENTIFIC-THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF
DEVELOPMENT CENTERS IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

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Abstract: This article thoroughly examines the scientific-theoretical and methodological foundations for organizing development centers in preschool educational institutions. The role of development centers in the holistic development of children—encompassing intellectual, social, emotional, and creative domains—is analyzed based on contemporary pedagogical theories, state educational standards, and national and international best practices. The study identifies student-centered, competency-based, and activity-oriented approaches as key methodological principles. The results highlight the effectiveness of development centers in improving the quality of preschool education and fostering children's independence, creativity, and readiness for further learning.

Keywords: preschool education, development centers, student-centered approach, competency-based approach, pedagogical methodology, child development.

INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, the processes of reforming the preschool education system are intensifying, and its importance as the foundational stage of lifelong learning is increasing. The preschool age is the most critical period for the formation of a child's learning ability and personality traits, a time of significant intellectual, emotional, physical, and social development. Therefore, organizing the educational process in preschool institutions based on modern pedagogical approaches is of paramount importance. One of the effective ways to improve the quality of preschool education is the creation of specially organized learning and play environments known as "development centers." Development centers form an educational environment that encourages children's active participation, independent exploration, and creative expression, while taking into account their individual interests, needs, and capabilities. In recent years, within the reforms in the preschool education sector of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the concept of development centers has become a priority direction, emphasizing child-centered education and the development of competencies. The purpose of this article is to identify the scientific-theoretical foundations of development centers, develop methodological aspects for their organization, and provide recommendations for practical implementation.

SCIENTIFIC-THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

The theoretical basis of development centers is rooted in classical and contemporary pedagogy and psychology. L.S. Vygotsky's "Zone of Proximal Development" Theory. Vygotsky emphasized that a child develops most effectively in the interval between tasks they can perform independently and tasks they can accomplish with the help of adults or peers. Development centers create precisely such an environment, where a child engages in activities that are slightly above their current ability level but manageable with adult or peer support. Learning through play and social interaction is a practical manifestation of this theory.

Ideas of Forming an Active Individual. In Uzbek preschool pedagogy, the child is viewed as an active, independent, and creative individual. Development centers provide the child with opportunities to make their own decisions, make choices, and feel responsible for their activities. This idea aligns with the perspective inherent in our national spirituality: "The child is the center of an active world."

The "Environment as the Third Teacher" Concept (based on M. Montessori and the Reggio Emilia approach). A child's development occurs as a result of their active interaction with the environment. Therefore, each center established in the classroom is a component of the environment and must be purposefully, safely, richly, and encouragingly prepared. Materials in the centers should stimulate the child to explore, discover, and think independently.

Uzbek Pedagogy and National Values. In organizing development centers, it is crucial to provide children with opportunities to learn about their national culture, traditions, languages, and values. Centers such as the "Uzbek National Culture Center" or "Folk Crafts Center" contribute to the upbringing of children based on national-spiritual values.

METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR ORGANIZING DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

The effective organization of development centers must be based on the following pedagogical approaches. Student-Centered Approach. This approach places the child's individual characteristics, interests, and developmental pace at the center of all organizational decisions. The educator observes each child, identifies their developmental needs, and accordingly plans the types of activities in the centers. The child's right to free choice and the opportunity to implement personal projects are ensured.

Competency-Based Approach. Through development centers, the child acquires not only knowledge but also vital skills and competencies. These competencies include:

- Communication Competence: speech, listening, interaction (speech development center).
- Social Competence: cooperation, respect for others, adherence to rules (play centers).
- Cognitive Competence: problem-solving, logical thinking, observation (mathematics, nature study centers).
- Creative Competence: imagination, design, expression (art, construction centers).

Activity-Oriented Approach. For preschool-aged children, play is the primary form of activity. Development centers create conditions for organizing various types of play activities (role-playing, constructive, games with rules). The child learns through activity, with their hands and senses, leading to deeper and more stable assimilation of knowledge. Integrated Approach. Development centers interconnect various educational domains (speech, mathematical concepts, environmental awareness, art) to form a holistic educational content. For example, within a "Grocery Store" center, a child can simultaneously engage in art (drawing advertisement posters), mathematics (calculating money), speech (interaction with the seller), and social concepts (occupations). The New Role of the Educator. In the development center system, the educator transitions from the traditional "knowledge transmitter" role to that of a "planner," "facilitator," "observer," and "motivator." Their task is to create an interesting, stimulating environment, subtly guide the child's activity (scaffolding), and observe and document each child's progress.

PRACTICAL STAGES OF ORGANIZING DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

Planning and Design Stage. The educator plans the themes and types of centers, considering curriculum requirements, the class age, and the specific characteristics of the children. The following centers are typically recommended in a classroom:

- Speech and Literature Center (book corner)
- Mathematics and Logic Games Center
- Art and Creativity Center
- Construction and Technologies Center
- Nature and Ecology Center
- Role-Playing Game Center (e.g., household, professions)

Environment Preparation Stage. Materials are selected and arranged for each center. The materials should be accessible, safe, aesthetic, and allow for self-checking possibilities for the children. The environment should be flexible and changeable, able to respond to children's new interests. Launch and Adaptation Stage. The educator introduces the centers to the children, explains how to use the materials and the rules. Initially, children explore freely, and later begin to engage with more complex tasks. Observation and Assessment Stage. The educator's primary task is to observe children's actions, accurately record the decisions they are making and the problems they are solving. These observations serve as the basis for further planning, discussing individual approaches, and reporting to parents. Reflection and Review Stage. The educator questions the effectiveness of the centers, the children's interest, and updates, complicates, or changes the environment. This is a continuous process of improvement.

CONCLUSION

Organizing development centers in preschool educational institutions is a scientifically grounded modern method of educating children as active, independent, creative, and self-aware individuals. Its theoretical basis lies in the most advanced ideas of world and national pedagogy, and its methodological basis rests on child-centered, activity-based approaches. Development centers create vast opportunities for individualizing educational content, developing various

competencies in children, and satisfying their natural interests. Their effectiveness depends on educators' thorough mastery of the theory and practice of this system, their continuous professional development, and their deep respect for children. The widespread implementation and enhancement of the work quality of development centers in Uzbekistan's preschool education system is a crucial factor in further improving the quality of education and raising a physically, intellectually, and spiritually mature future generation.

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