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PEDAGOGICAL POSSIBILITIES OF ART THERAPY IN THE CORRECTION OF EMOTIONAL DISORDERS IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract: The article discusses the pedagogical opportunities of art therapy as an effective means of correcting emotional disorders in children and adolescents within the context of modern education and upbringing. It analyzes the theoretical approaches of the founders and key researchers of art therapy (E. Kramer, M. E. Burno, A. I. Kopytin, E. E. Svistovskaya, M. V. Kiseleva, C. Malchiodi, and others) in their application to pedagogical practice. Special attention is paid to the mechanisms of the pedagogical impact of various types of art therapy on the emotional and volitional sphere of students. Using the example of the «Mehrli maktab» hospital school in the Republic of Uzbekistan, the practical experience of applying art therapy to correct emotional disorders in children undergoing long-term treatment is revealed. The author substantiates the conclusion that art therapy acts not only as a method of psychological assistance, but also as a significant pedagogical tool that promotes the harmonization of personal development, successful socialization, and the creation of a psychologically safe educational environment.

Keywords: art therapy, pedagogical opportunities, correction of emotional disorders, social pedagogy, hospital pedagogy, education.

Introduction

The relevance of studying emotional disorders in children and adolescents in the modern educational environment is undeniable. Rising rates of anxiety, aggression, various fears, and difficulties with social adaptation necessitate the search for effective, sustainable, and humanistic methods of intervention by educators and social workers. Art therapy is one such method, located at the intersection of psychology, pedagogy, and art. The purpose of this article is to analyze the theoretical foundations and explore the pedagogical potential of art therapy for the treatment of emotional disorders, drawing on the works of key researchers, and to present practical experience of its application in educational practice in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

1. Theoretical Origins of the Pedagogical Approach to Art Therapy

The pedagogical understanding of art therapy is largely based on the works of its founders. English artist Adrian Hill, who first used the term "art therapy" in 1942, discovered that the process of visual creativity helps seriously ill patients distract themselves from their suffering and mobilize internal resources for recovery. This observation laid the foundation for understanding art therapy as a developmental and supportive process.

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Edith Kramer was a key figure in this field. She viewed art therapy not so much as a treatment in the medical sense, but rather as a process associated with unlocking a person's creative potential and understanding their inner world [1]. Kramer argued that visual activity itself has a healing effect, allowing the sublimation of destructive impulses and the harmonizing of emotional states. In her practice, she also developed approaches to assessing children's creativity, which allow educators to better understand the child's emotional needs [2].

A. I. Kopytin made a significant contribution to the integration of art therapy into education. He developed not only the clinical but also the pedagogical aspects of art therapy. Of particular interest is his concept of "healing interaction with the environment," which emphasizes the importance of creating a therapeutic space, which directly resonates with the goals of organizing an educational environment [3]. Together with E. E. Svistovskaya, he summarized the principles of using art therapy with children, demonstrating its effectiveness as a means of diagnosing and correcting emotional disorders [4].

The Creative Self-Expression Therapy (CST) method, developed by Professor M. E. Burno, deserves special attention. Although the method was developed for clinical practice, its pedagogical adaptation has proven extremely fruitful. CST is based on three fundamental principles: understand people's characters; find your own character and inherent inclinations among them; choose a life path, occupation, and hobbies that suit your character [5]. As experience with CST in school education shows, this approach helps students recognize their uniqueness and find inspiration in useful endeavors, which carries a powerful psychohygienic charge, eliminating anxiety and apathy [5].

2. Contemporary Research in the Context of Social Pedagogy and Education

A practice-oriented approach to using art therapy with children is presented in the works of M. V. Kiseleva. In her manual for educators and psychologists, she describes in detail the mechanisms of working with various types of art therapy: art therapy, fairy tale therapy, sand therapy, music therapy, and phototherapy [6]. Of particular value to educators are the stages of the sessions and specific exercises she describes, systematized into thematic blocks: "I," "My Feelings," "My Body," and "I and Society." Among the exercises aimed at correcting emotional disorders, the following stand out: "My Mood," "Feelings," "My Portrait in the Rays of the Sun" (working with self-esteem), and "Friendship" (developing communication skills) [6].

Researcher Cathy Malchiodi has made an invaluable contribution to the understanding of how visual images help children express what is difficult to convey in words. She emphasizes that children's drawings are not simply a projection of problems, but also a special language through which the child shares feelings and ideas [7]. This approach is fundamentally important when working with children with emotional and communication barriers.

3. Art Therapy Practice in a Hospital School: The Case of Uzbekistan

Of particular interest is the application of art therapy methods in hospital settings, where children are subject to long-term treatment and forced isolation from their usual educational environment. Unique experience in this area has been accumulated by the "Mehrli Maktab" hospital school in the Republic of Uzbekistan and its branches.

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During the teaching process at this hospital school, the positive impact of art therapy sessions on the emotional state of children and adolescents undergoing long-term treatment for oncohematological diseases has been observed. The space and routine of a hospital ward naturally limit a child's physical and temporal well-being. However, in art therapy, as one of the art therapy modalities, creative activities contribute to the gradual stabilization of students' emotional state.

Practical observation reveals the following dynamics. For example, an eight-year-old child undergoing long-term treatment often refused to attend classes due to rapid fatigue and emotional depression. At the beginning of his art therapy sessions, he depicted primarily frightening characters in his drawings—monsters, dragons, and scenes involving fire—using primarily dark and somber colors. However, after several sessions, his works began to incorporate brighter hues, images of cartoon characters, and landscape compositions reflecting a more positive emotional state. This is consistent with E. Kramer's observation that visual activity allows one to sublimate destructive impulses and harmonize emotions [5].

A similar dynamic was observed in a sixteen-year-old girl. Initially, she used a predominantly dark color scheme and depicted scenes associated with feelings of isolation and anxiety. Over time, her palette became dominated by light and saturated colors. The art therapy sessions inspired her to create a canvas painting reflecting the national values and cultural motifs of Uzbekistan. It was with this creative work that she subsequently won a competition organized by the Academy of Arts of Uzbekistan. This example demonstrates how art therapy can become a bridge to positive self-expression and social acceptance, even in challenging life circumstances.

Such positive changes are observed not only in children of primary and secondary school age, but also in older adolescents (17–18 years old). They show increasing interest in various artistic endeavors—graphics, painting, and experimental forms, including creating relief images on canvas using textured paste. During artistic creation, students gradually develop an interest in more positive themes. These changes manifest themselves in both individual and group creative activities and contribute to the stabilization of emotional states and the gradual return of students to educational activities.

Thus, art therapy methods create a favorable psychological and pedagogical environment that promotes emotional stabilization, the development of creative potential, and the maintenance of educational activity in children during long-term treatment.

4. Pedagogical Potential and Correction Mechanisms

Summarizing the views of the above authors and practical experience, we can highlight the key pedagogical potential of art therapy implemented in the educational environment:

1. Development of emotional intelligence. Art therapy creates conditions for children to learn to recognize, differentiate, and verbalize their feelings. By portraying fear, sadness, or anger, children are no longer alone with them, gaining the ability to reflect on and manage their emotional states. In hospital practice, this is manifested in a transition from depicting frightening images to more positive narratives.

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2. Correction of the emotional-volitional sphere. As practice at the "Mehrli Maktab" hospital school shows, systematic art therapy sessions help reduce anxiety, overcome fears, and generally harmonize the emotional state. A change in the color palette from dark to light tones is a clear indicator of this dynamic. 3. Socialization and development of communication skills. Group art therapy sessions create a safe psychological space for interpersonal interaction, even in a hospital setting. They teach children cooperation and empathy and help overcome feelings of isolation.

4. Self-knowledge and the development of adequate self-esteem. The creative process allows children to see the visible results of their efforts and to feel their own uniqueness and competence. Participation in and victory in the Academy of Arts competition for a hospital school patient was a powerful factor in increasing self-esteem and self-confidence.

5. Creation of a psychologically safe educational environment. Art therapy is inherently a non-judgmental and accepting space. In an atmosphere where there is no “right” or “wrong” outcome, children can be themselves without fear of judgment. In a hospital setting, this becomes a crucial condition for maintaining mental well-being and educational motivation.

Conclusion

Thus, an analysis of the theoretical approaches of E. Kramer, M. E. Burno, A. I. Kopytina, M. V. Kiseleva, and K. Malchiodi, as well as the practical experience of using art therapy in the Mehrli Maktab hospital school in Uzbekistan, convincingly demonstrate that art therapy has powerful pedagogical potential. It serves not simply as a method for correcting emotional disorders, but also as a holistic pedagogical system that promotes the harmonious development of a child's personality, their successful socialization, and adaptation, even in difficult life circumstances. The introduction of art therapy principles and technologies into the work of social educators, caregivers, and teachers opens up new prospects for creating a truly humanistic and developmental educational practice, which is especially relevant in the context of the modernization of pedagogical education in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

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