

INTEGRATIVE FOUNDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING COGNITIVE COMPETENCIES IN 5–6-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN BASED ON THE “ILK QADAM” STATE CURRICULUM

Mohira Hikmatillayevna Quvvatova

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Pedagogical Sciences Lecturer,
Department of Organization of Preschool Education Termez State
Pedagogical Institute, Uzbekistan

Abstract: *The article analyzes the integrative foundations for developing cognitive competencies in 5–6-year-old children based on the “Ilk Qadam” State Curriculum. It highlights the importance of integrating different areas of child development, activity-based learning, a developmental environment, and reliance on children’s personal experience. The article also substantiates the potential of pedagogical observation, portfolio analysis, diagnostic tasks, and interviews for assessing cognitive competencies in preschool children.*

Keywords: *integrative approach, cognitive competence, preschool education, 5–6-year-old children, “Ilk Qadam” State Curriculum, developmental environment, assessment.*

Аннотация: *В статье проанализированы интегративные основы развития познавательных компетенций у детей 5–6 лет на основе государственной учебной программы «Илк кадам». Раскрыто значение интеграции различных областей развития ребенка, деятельностного подхода, развивающей среды и опоры на личный опыт ребенка. Также обоснованы возможности педагогического наблюдения, анализа портфолио, диагностических заданий и беседы при оценивании познавательных компетенций детей дошкольного возраста.*

Ключевые слова: интегративный подход, познавательная компетентность, дошкольное образование, дети 5–6 лет, государственная учебная программа «Илк кадам», развивающая среда, оценивание.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada “Ilk qadam” davlat o‘quv dasturi asosida 5–6 yoshli bolalarda bilish kompetensiyalarini rivojlantirishning integrativ asoslari tahlil qilingan. Bolaning rivojlanish sohalarini o‘zaro integratsiyalash, faoliyatga asoslangan ta’lim, rivojlantiruvchi muhit va bolaning shaxsiy tajribasiga tayanishning ahamiyati yoritilgan. Shuningdek, bilish kompetensiyalarini baholashda pedagogik kuzatish, rivojlanish portfoliolarini tahlil qilish, diagnostik topshiriqlar hamda suhbat metodlarining imkoniyatlari asoslangan.

Kalit so‘zlar: integrativ yondashuv, bilish kompetensiyasi, maktabgacha ta’lim, 5–6 yoshli bolalar, “Ilk qadam” davlat o‘quv dasturi, rivojlantiruvchi muhit, baholash.

Ensuring the comprehensive development of children within the preschool education system is one of the priority areas of modern pedagogy. Today, the content of preschool education is aimed not only at providing children with certain knowledge, but also at developing competencies such as independent thinking, understanding the surrounding environment, solving problematic situations, organizing their own activities, and applying acquired knowledge in practical activities. From this perspective, the “Ilk Qadam” State Curriculum, one of the main regulatory documents defining the content of preschool education in the Republic of Uzbekistan, has been developed based on the methodological principles of the integrative approach, in which child development is interpreted as a holistic pedagogical process.

The main conceptual idea of the “Ilk Qadam” State Curriculum is to place the child’s personal development at the center, organize the educational process in accordance with the child’s age-related, psychological, and individual characteristics, and ensure the integration of different areas of development. In this curriculum, the child is regarded not as a passive object of the educational process, but as an active participant, researcher, and subject who acquires knowledge through personal experience. This directly corresponds to the fundamental philosophical and pedagogical principles of the integrative approach.

From the perspective of the integrative approach, the development of a preschool child is considered not as a collection of separate developmental areas, but as a holistic system of interconnected developmental processes. The “Ilk Qadam” State Curriculum organizes child development on the basis of five major developmental areas. These are:

- physical development and formation of a healthy lifestyle;
- social-emotional development;
- speech, communication, reading, and writing skills;
- cognitive development;
- creative development.

The organization of these developmental areas not as isolated components but as interconnected processes constitutes the essential content of integrative education. This is because the cognitive activity of a 5–6-year-old child is not limited to the process of thinking alone. In the process of acquiring new knowledge, the child simultaneously observes, communicates, expresses emotions, acts, thinks creatively, and gains social experience.

Developmental Sequence of Cognitive Competencies in 5–6-Year-Old Children Based on the Integrative Approach

Stage	Developmental Direction	Result
1	Formation of interest and motivation	A need for cognition emerges
2	Development of perception and thinking processes	Understanding and analysis of knowledge develop
3	Application through practical activities	Skills and experience are formed
4	Independent thinking and creativity	The ability to solve problematic situations develops
5	Reflection and communication	The ability to evaluate one's own activity and exchange ideas develops

The “Cognitive Development” area specified in the “Ilk Qadam” curriculum is specifically aimed at developing children’s intellectual activity. It includes the development of cognitive competencies such as observing, comparing, grouping, analyzing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, asking questions, and drawing independent conclusions. The integrative approach serves as the principal methodological mechanism for developing these competencies.

For example, when organizing an integrative activity on the topic “Natural Phenomena,” the child does not merely acquire knowledge about nature. The child observes seasonal changes, expresses opinions

based on observations, learns new words, compares natural objects, identifies quantitative characteristics, and expresses ideas through creative activities. As a result, cognitive, speech, mathematical, social, and creative competencies develop simultaneously during a single activity. This process ensures the integrated implementation of the developmental areas envisaged in the “Ilk Qadam” curriculum.

Another important idea promoted in the curriculum is the principle of child development through activity. According to this principle, the child does not acquire knowledge in a ready-made form, but independently develops it through play, experimentation, observation, communication, and practical actions. In this regard, the activity-based content of the “Ilk Qadam” curriculum is consistent with the integrative approach. In integrated activities, children have the opportunity to apply different types of knowledge and skills in real-life situations.

For example, during an activity on the topic “Properties of Water,” the child acquires knowledge of natural science by observing different states of water, develops mathematical concepts by measuring the amount of water, develops speech competence by discussing the results of the experiment, and develops visual and creative activity through completing a creative task related to water. Such integrative activity enables the child to understand knowledge not as separate components, but as a unified system.

One of the important features of the “Ilk Qadam” State Curriculum is that the teacher is viewed not as the central source of knowledge, but as a subject who organizes, guides, and supports the child’s development. This approach corresponds to the learner-centered principle of integrative pedagogy. The educator does not provide ready-made answers to the child, but creates pedagogical conditions that encourage

independent thinking, questioning, exploration, and drawing conclusions.

In addition, the considerable attention given in the curriculum to organizing a developmental environment represents another important manifestation of the integrative approach. Children's cognitive competencies are formed not only during specially organized activities, but also throughout their everyday activities. Experimentation centers, creative activity zones, nature corners, and construction activities provide children with opportunities to act independently, conduct experiments, and test their knowledge in practice.

Our research shows that the integrative nature of the “Ilk Qadam” State Curriculum is manifested in three major scientific ideas. First, the holistic development of the child is ensured; that is, physical, intellectual, social-emotional, and creative development processes are organized in an interconnected manner. Second, educational content is connected with the child's real-life experience, which increases the practical significance of knowledge. Third, the child is regarded as an active subject, with priority given to the development of independent thinking and research abilities.

In other words, the “Ilk Qadam” State Curriculum is an important pedagogical source that defines the conceptual foundations for developing cognitive competencies in preschool children through an integrative approach. The interrelationship among developmental areas, the principle of activity-based learning, the creation of a developmental environment, and reliance on the child's personal experience reflected in the curriculum provide a scientific and methodological basis for developing competencies in 5–6-year-old children, including observation, analysis, independent thinking, problem solving, and the application of

new knowledge in practical activities. In this regard, the “Ilk Qadam” curriculum can be regarded as a practical manifestation of the integrative approach within the national preschool education system.

From the perspective of our research, the integrative approach serves as the principal methodological principle in assessing cognitive competencies in 5–6-year-old children. This is because children’s cognitive activity cannot be divided into separate developmental areas. For example, during an activity on the topic “Plant Growth,” the child simultaneously expands knowledge about nature, demonstrates observation skills, asks questions, develops mathematical concepts such as comparing and measuring growth, develops speech competencies by expressing observation results, and demonstrates creative abilities. Therefore, the assessment process should also take this holistic activity into account.

Pedagogical observation plays an important role in determining the level of development of cognitive competencies. Observation is one of the most natural and effective methods of assessing preschool children because the child demonstrates their actual abilities not in an artificial testing situation, but during ordinary play, activities, experiments, and communication. The educator systematically records such indicators as:

- interest in new situations;
- activity in asking questions;
- ability to maintain attention during observation;
- ability to compare objects and phenomena;
- ability to explain causal relationships;
- ability to make independent decisions.

For example, the teacher may organize a small experiment on the topic “Which objects float in water and which sink?” It is important not

only for the child to state the result, but also to justify their reasoning. If the child can explain, “The stone sinks because it is heavy,” or “The wood floats because it is light,” this indicates the development of analytical thinking and cognitive competence.

The second effective tool is the analysis of developmental portfolios. A portfolio is a diagnostic tool that reflects the results achieved by a child over a certain period. It may include the child’s creative works, drawings, projects, experiment results, pedagogical observation records, and products of activity. A portfolio makes it possible to determine not only the child’s final result, but also the dynamics of their development.

For example, when analyzing a child’s drawings on the topic of nature, changes in the child’s ability to distinguish objects, identify their characteristics, use imagination, and generalize can be observed. If a child initially depicts a tree in a simple form but later begins to represent its parts—roots, trunk, leaves, and fruit—this indicates that the child’s knowledge is becoming deeper and more differentiated.

The third method is assessment through diagnostic tasks and developmental situations. In this method, the child is presented with a specific problem, and the process of completing the task is analyzed. The primary focus is not on the final answer, but on the child’s thinking strategy.

For example, the task “There were 5 trees in the garden. Another 3 trees were planted. How many trees are there now?” demonstrates not only mathematical knowledge but also the child’s logical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

Similarly, the question “If the sun did not appear for one week, what changes would occur in nature?” makes it possible to determine the

child's ability to understand cause-and-effect relationships, formulate hypotheses, and draw conclusions.

The fourth method is the interview and question-and-answer method. Cognitive competencies in preschool children are often manifested through speech. The way a child expresses ideas, asks questions, and explains phenomena reflects the level of development of their thinking. Therefore, educators should use open-ended questions to identify children's thinking processes, such as:

- "Why do you think so?"
- "What would happen if it were different?"
- "How could this be tested?"

Such questions encourage children's independent thinking.

Determining the level of development of cognitive competencies in preschool children, particularly at the age of 5–6, is one of the important areas of modern pedagogy for scientifically studying the child's personal development. To organize this process effectively, assessment should not be limited to determining the amount of knowledge acquired by the child. Rather, it should involve a comprehensive analysis of the level of development of cognitive activity, opportunities for independent thinking, ways of understanding the surrounding environment, research activities, and the ability to apply knowledge in practical situations. From this perspective, the development of methodological foundations for assessing cognitive competencies requires reliance on the fundamental principles of contemporary pedagogical paradigms.

REFERENCES

1. Ministry of Preschool Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2018). *Ilk Qadam: State Curriculum of the Preschool Educational Institution*. Tashkent: Ministry of Preschool Education.

2. Bruner, J. S. (1961). The Act of Discovery. Harvard Educational Review, 31(1), 21–32.
3. Dewey, J. (1938). Experience and Education. New York: Macmillan.
4. Piaget, J. (1952). The Origins of Intelligence in Children. New York: International Universities Press.
5. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
6. OECD. (2019). OECD Future of Education and Skills 2030: OECD Learning Compass 2030. Paris: OECD Publishing.
7. Gardner, H. (1983). Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences. New York: Basic Books.
8. UNESCO. (2021). Right from the Start: Build Inclusive Societies through Inclusive Early Childhood Education. Paris: UNESCO.
9. UNICEF. (2019). A World Ready to Learn: Prioritizing Quality Early Childhood Education. New York: UNICEF.
10. Bloom, B. S. (Ed.). (1956). Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals. New York: David McKay Company.