Psychopedagogy of PLAY

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Foreword

Psychopedagogy of play brings forward a topic of constant interest: the game.

The author of this book is junior lecturer Gabriela Kelemen, PhD Candidate from the Faculty of Educational Sciences and Social Work of the "Aurel Vlaicu" University of Arad.

The volume *Psychopedagogy of play,* approaches the importance of playing in a child's life but also throughout the entire human existence, as mentioned by the author herself: Playing is a fundamental human activity that pervades the entire life and all cultures. Playing is the main and fundamental childhood activity. It is the engine that activates and determines the development of one's personality, gives meaning to one's life, develops cognitive abilities, social relations and favours harmonious physical development. The game is the main way of child' intellectual development and training during early childhood and preschool age.

The author of the book highlights how prestigious pedagogues and psychologists have approached playing. They were interested in the role games have in the child's harmonious development, stating the fundamental role of games in shaping the child's personality in preschool age. Classic authors such as: R.Buhler, S.Freud, A.Adler, M.Montessori, Ed.Claparede, J.Chateau, Smilansky, S.,V ĝotski, J.Piaget and contemporary authors: Şchiopu, U., Verza, E., (1997), Sawyer, R., K., (2001), Glava (2002), Schaffer (2005) have underlined the formative value of games in general and of games during childhood in particular.

The book is divided into chapters and subchapters which comprise fundamental concepts on the development of child's personality through

playing, explanatory theories on the nature and function of games, the taxonomy of games, integrating play activities in the curricular content of preschool education, games as method, means and form of unfolding didactic activities in kindergarten, games and toys, etc. More specifically, we can say that this book has the structure of a course book addressed both to students, future teachers, and to preschool teachers facing a tenure exam, first and second degree exam. The work is useful to all who are interested in widening their knowledge of aspects like:

- An overview of the play,

- Psychopedagogy of play,

- The history of studies concerning play,

- Fundamental theories on games used in the instruction process,

- Classification of games,

- Scenarios for using games in a child's life,

- The role and functions of games,

- Playing games according to age levels,

- Planning instructive-educational activities in kindergartens,

- Methodology of planning and organizing games at preschool level,

- The place of game and toy in pre-schoolers' life.

This book highlights the importance of game, *the history* of games, and the role they play in human development. The book is has an innovated character which complies with current tendencies of modern psychopedagogy by approaching to inter- and multidisciplinary. Besides handling game as permanently human reality, the book shows its importance in a child's life as universal and specific activity in all stages of its evolution.

This volume captures the causality relationship between game and development, relationship that stresses out the importance of games in the development of personality from birth to school age. Emphasis is laid especially on the role of games as fundamental activity in kindergartens, on its importance in the development of all facets of a child's personality, in socializing and school preparation. The pedagogic argumentation is convincing and offers practical and methodological suggestions according to tendencies of modern didactics.

We have to mention numerous citations and references, which proves good scientific information but we also have to notice the elements of originality.

From the book "*Psychopedagogy of play",* we find out which is the specific of childhood age, behavioural tendencies, predominant activities at this level of ontogenetic development and which are the less desirable attitudes of adults towards children.

The book addresses to students, educators (preschool teachers, primary school teachers, teachers, parents, etc.), to all those interested in the education of children.

Prof. Miron IONESCU, PhD

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Argument

The man often finds it hard to understand what is important in life. Many questions such as: what is the meaning of life, what is the deep meaning of the word love, why do we experience death, what is the role of games in a child's life are vital and each of us has asked them at least once.

Man, no matter where he was born on this Earth or where he lives, has universally valid feelings which he experiences in a personal manner. Though, we all understand differently the great challenges of life.

Playing is a fundamental human activity that pervades one's entire existence and all cultures.

Playing is the main and fundamental childhood activity. It is the engine that activates and determines the development of one's personality, gives meaning to one's life, develops cognitive abilities, social relations and favours harmonious physical development. The game is the main way of child' intellectual development and training during early childhood and preschool age.

If games have such implications in shaping the child's personality, the following questions are legitimate:

- Why do children chose to play, what does playing mean to them?
- What is the relationship between game and imagination?
- What is the relationship between game and development?
- Does any game have efficient impact on the development of child's personality?

- To what type of games should we turn our attention?

We will try to find elaborate answers to these questions in this volume.

A legitimate question is why do children play?

We have two answers offered by two prestigious pedagogues:

"To understand better the social context of their life and adjust to it (Donaldson, 1978).

"To maintain control over their life, control provided just by playing" (Garvey, 1977).

Which is the role of playing activities at preschool age?

"Playing is the main manner of education –training at preschool age" (Vîgotski, 2002).

Which are the most important influences of games on the child?

The most important educational influences of games in didactic activity can be noticed in the development of psychical processes:

- thinking;
- imagination and creativity;
- affection;
- motivation;
- memory.

"Memory experiences a spectacular development at preschool age, which would bring about the formation of representations and the development of imagination. By playing, the pre-schooler creates imaginary situations.

Child's creativity is also developed by playing" (Vîgotski, 2002).

"Imagination is usually defined as the human mind's ability to create mentally objects and phenomena that we visualize in mental images" (Hughes, 1988).

Vîgotskî (2002) distinguishes two basic types of imaginative activity: reproductive and combined. Creative activities are based on the brain's ability to combine elements in imagination. Imagination and creativity are developed through social and cultural interactions, as well as by knowledge acquisition. Games develop imagination. Although the child activates on physical, real level, imagination can lead him anywhere. Physically, the child is present in reality but his mind shifts to the imaginary plan by playing. In games, children overcome their age, abilities, physical appearance, potential; they can be whoever they want to be. (Vîgotski, 2002).

Psychologists have identified the egocentric character of ante-pre-schoolers' and pre-schoolers' behaviour and concluded that egocentrism can be overcome just through plays. Contradictions disappear when they play, they can interrelate with adults, solve their conflicts and understand social constraints and rules more easily.

Sawyer (1997, 2001) shows that at the age of 3-6, games such as role-play, socio-dramas, and games with rules bring about new acquisitions in terms of social behaviours. By creativity, children improve drama games which depict aspects of real life. These games teach children desirable behaviours, social rules, how to relate to one situation or another and how to lead a conversation driven by a conventional situation.

Plays are important for the freedom they give a child to improvise in

various playing situations. Therefore, games sometimes have a chaotic and random character.

In spite of these shortages, playing is the main way to develop and form the personality; it offers the opportunity of creating the area of future development. (Vîgotski, 2002).

According to studies conducted by psycho-pedagogues, playing determines a superior evolution of mental processes which the child interiorizes as he grows up: the speech, the logical and voluntary memory, abstract thinking and rules of social behaviour become internal. Therefore it is important that pre-school educational programmes are be centred on playing. By playing, children are capable of gaining successfully any experience, no matter how complex it is, but only if one takes into consideration the age characteristics.

Playing should be a priority of preschool education.

The book is a handy tool for everyone. The author tries to lead the readers into the study of play with its extremely important aspects in childhood period. The book addresses to students, educators (pre-school and primary school teachers, teachers, parents, family, to all who make a contribution to the child's harmonious development.

Contents

Chapter 1

Play-Conceptual Delimitations

1.1 Play, the Essence of a Child's Universe

Frederick Fröbel (1782-1852) the founder of kindergarten believes that humans are creative and productive, if they are given the proper environment for development. What separates humans from other beings is the desire to change the environment they live in, to interfere creatively for their own benefit. Man created everything, from primitive tools to sophisticated devices by the brains' ability to see three-dimensionally and by the ability of imagining future, creating and recreating it in a unique manner. Teachers have to be good pedagogues, to surround children with love, appreciation and encouragement so that the child would reach the highest level of development and creativity. The environment should offer the child safety and freedom to play with children of the same age. His kindergarten provided children with toys to play with, and the activities carried out there were playing, singing and building. They gave the children the opportunity to explore, compare and test. His pedagogic ideas were based on four basic components of kindergarten activity: free activities, creative games, social games and movement games. It had started from the idea that true education should teach children that they are capable of creating anything with their mental possibilities where play is the motor of true learning. Playing is not just a behaviour but a biological imperative which encourages discovering the way the surrounding world "functions". The child has an innate desire to act and know, therefore kindergarten didactic activity should direct this innate energy towards activities that would develop the child's creativity based on kindergarten experiences. Any child is unique, every child is ready to acquire knowledge according to its inner nature and it is a waste of time to try to make the child learn something which is not in relation to his intrinsic features. Educating involves the educator's activity of "leading" the learner (child) to knowledge in a qualified institution that meets the demands required by this

activity: the kindergarten. The whole atmosphere in a kindergarten is especially designed to support the overall child development, based on didactic methodology that sets the child with its innate abilities in the foreground. The aim is to develop the personality by means of playing.

Playing makes us think about something easy and fun, however it is part of the human life and has also serious connotations: playing in a theatre performance, playing chess, playing the stock market or if we take the figurative meaning: "playing with life", "playing with fire", "mind games" etc. It is obvious that playing is a part of human activity at all ages and social levels. From times immemorial games and playing has been a part of human life. Greeks regarded it as child specific activity, for Jews it was synonym to fun and jokes, for Germans (spielen) it was an activity that brought satisfaction, in Sanskrit games (cleada) meant something that would bring joy and for us, the Romanians (ludo) playing is regarded as something that would bring happiness. In time, the significance of the word was reduced to an activity that does not require hard work and effort, characterized by a state of well-being and pleasure, when we refer to childhood games and a more elaborate interpretation when we refer to acting, playing the stock market or playing in sport competitions. The child could make the best distinction between these two types of games. Many psychologists have tried to elaborate a theory of playing but they have faced difficulties due to biological and psychological interpretations.

Undoubtedly, plays are part of the universal culture. Prestigious thinkers such as Fr. Schiller, H. Spencer, W. Wundt elaborated philosophical, psychological and aesthetic opinions related to plays.

Herbert Spencer[1] makes an analogy between human and animal play, seeing them as a manner of energy consumption. Both man and animal play, but for animals it is an instinct driven activity while for people it is an aesthetic one. Spencer advances a unique interpretation of the energy overload, regarding playing as a pre-condition of artistic and aesthetic enjoyment. Enjoyment, as link between aesthetic activity and playing was introduced by Schiller and had influenced the future elaboration of a theoretical interpretation of play. Though Spencer didn't give a particular attention to play and to the elaboration of a play theory, his interest for play was determined, as in Schiller's case, by his interest in the nature of aesthetic experience. He explains the energy overload through the evolutionist biological context. H. Spencer's conception of play is clearly stated in the following assertion: *Activities called games are linked to aesthetic activities by a mutual feature, namely that none of them helps directly processes that serve life* (H. Spencer 1897). Regarding the origin of playing impulses, H. Spencer develops his idea as follows: *inferior animal species have a general trait due to which all their energy is consumed to fulfil functions which are essential for their life. They are constantly preoccupied to search for food, to avoid enemies, build hideouts, and provide food and shelter.* For Spencer, the difference between playing and aesthetic activity is given by skills. One uses inferior skills for playing and aesthetic activity requires superior skills.

W. Wundt[2] understands better the nature of play than the previous two thinkers, and although he considers plays the results of enjoyment, Wundt confers play another nature too: *Play is the result of work. There is no game that isn't built on the results of real work, which always precedes it in terms of*

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[1] In 1855, Spencer wrote "The Principles of Psychology " where he explored a mind theory as a biological component of the body. In this model, human intelligence represented something that used to develop slowly, as a response to physical environment.

[2] Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920). The physiologist W. Wundt becomes teh first psychologist and psychology teacher of the Institute of Psychology.

time and essence. The need of existing commits man to work. While working, he gradually learns to cherish the action of his own force as source of satisfaction. Wundt also states that *Play by its nature removes the useful purpose of work, having as goal the pleasant result that accompanies work* (Wundt 1887).

1.2 The Universal Character of Playing

Human playing is a form of activity where social relations are recreated outside spontaneous social activities (Elkonin, 1980).

This definition justifies the association of play with art. Art by its artistic, aesthetic means interprets aspects of human life and activity revealing their beauty and expressiveness. In its historical development, human society practiced symbolic games. Humanity gave up primitive forms of play in adults' life along with the evolution towards a modern civilization. In exchange, the role of play in a child's life increased and brought about the study of play as significant part in the development of child's as future personality. Play won't be possible without imagination and phantasy. The essence and charm of play lies precisely in the way the child changes common objects into favourite beings through imagination. The child plays with a random object and through the "alchemy of phantasy" he turns the object into something else" as H. Complaire stated. The child catches the reality with its objectivity, is aware of it but adjusts this reality to own needs. For instance, the child sees fir cones, chestnuts and acorns under trees, recognizes this reality with its concrete objects but wishes that they were objects used in the game it thought about. Thus, fir cones turn into soldiers from his imaginary battle. The child actually performs an act of creation, starting from a concrete reality which he changes into an imaginary situation and recreates it according to own wishes. The child focuses on a target which becomes a fixed idea in his mind and by means of fantasy, the child reaches the target.

The whole surrounding reality changes into an element of the play. The child plays a role in its game and creates a certain situation which folds up on own wishes. Children reproduce a social reality, copy social relations from a certain period, and reproduce its characteristics and features.

The content of the play grasps this reality and the topics are taken from the child's social life. Still, psychologists consider that although plays reproduce the social reality typical for the period the child lives in, play as biological phenomenon has internal rules that act limitless in time and space. Girls have always acted as moms, played with dolls and boys acted like soldiers in a war. These games overcome social and time boundaries and make us see children games as a universal phenomenon.

1.3 The Polyvalent Character of Play

Play is a constant reality in a child's life and offers them the opportunity to adjust to a reality that they are only partly familiar with; therefore it overwhelms them with the amount of information that waste their energy with many bans and interdictions. Thus, reality seems like a constant struggle for adaptation, an effort to understand the reality, a battle of contrasts and an impediment that the child with his limited physical and psychical resources cannot overcome. The conflict, which occurs in their minds is dimmed and improved through play. Playing is linked to imagination and endless phantasy; it fills in the blanks of real life which is too complicated and complex for the child's possibilities. For children, playing is both work and art, it's useful and pleasant activity, phantasy and reality at once. The Swiss pedagogue, Édouard Claparède claims that for children *play is the life itself*[3], namely that objective,

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[3]Édouard Claparède, *Psihologia copilului şi pedagogia experimentală*, Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică, 1975.

touchable and real facts are intertwined in most natural way with phantasy, fiction, imaginary and dream in the child's mind.

1.4 Play, Constant Human Reality

Play can be found in human life at any age. From birth till the age of 3, children play instinctively, just by manipulating toys. After the age of 3, playing becomes a permanent and formative activity in the child's life. At preschool age, children play more and more complicated and complex games with pre-set rules. Adults also keep games in their lives as something precious. At adult age, games have more subtle meanings; they evolve to more refined forms from word games used in a conversation to the actors' play on the stage. Adults play various games such as rummy, chess, cards, monopoly, bridge, etc. when they relax, in society, among friends. Then we can discuss the role of games in medicine. These types of games have a therapeutic value, and are played as socio-drama and psycho-drama. From times immemorial people have been having fun playing games, either public or individual, being directly involved or watching them as spectators, for instance the Olympic Games, sport games etc. The evolution of technology brought about the evolution of games, thus computer games, mobile phone games, television games and other games on various gadgets have developed.

Prestigious psychologists have been interested by games and the role they have in the child's evolution over the decades.

L. J. Vîgoţski argued the importance of games in the development of a child's personality, therefore he stated that new situations and experiences should be considered which would place games in the centre of preschool education.

D. B. Elkonin[4] states that the leading role in the development of games at preschool age is played by the occurrence of unachievable tendencies.

A. N. Leontiev was also concerned with the psychology of play and therefore he developed new ideas stating that unachievable tendencies existed in a child's life since birth. What is worth mentioning is the fact that along with speech development, consciousness is formed and developed. What was unachievable for a child at the beginning of his life becomes achievable now, not in a real plan but in an unreal one, gaining new forms in terms of ideas. Starting from the material plan, playing with objects, the child internalizes actions, which undergo changes in the imaginary world. This is the part when games intervene. Do games build the imaginary situation or does the imagination build the game? It is, of course, a rhetorical question but with various interpretations. They all self-determine one another, making a contribution to the child's development.

We can talk about the game itself only after the age of 3, as self-awareness occurs. Before this age we are dealing with the concept of non-game, or playing without conscious involvement. The evolution and development of games is linked to the child's ontogenetic development. Psychologists who have been interested in the psychopedagogy of play have made remarkable contributions in the field, clarifying certain aspects which are important for the understanding of the development and role of play in a child's life. We mention here a few principles related to the historic conditions of the emergence of plays:

- Playing has a social nature, especially the games with rules because they are social by their origin: their emergence is socially determined and their content is also social,

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[4]D. B. Elkonin, 1980. op cit.

- Actual games occur at preschool age, after the age of 3, and they are determined by educational influences and the emergence of self-awareness,

- Educational games at preschool age are strongly influenced by inter-human relations. This aspect can be noticed in the content of games which reflect human activity, inter-human relations; thus playing becomes a form of adaptation to social demands,

- Playing has as manifestation technique the transfer of significance from real to imaginary life,

- Play with its functions, especially at preschool age, contributes to the child's mental development and shapes his personality.

The importance of play in the development of a child's personality is undeniable. Children need games and they need to play in order to have a harmonious development, grow up healthy and have confidence in their life.

Seminar Activities

Tasks and Applications

1. ▬

Starting with the following statement: "*The child laughs*: *Play is my wisdom and love!"* (Lucian Blaga), write a structural essay of 150 words.

Working time: 10 minutes.

2. ▬

Bring arguments in favour of the: *Play, the basic kindergarten activity* by working in teams.

3. ▬

Bring arguments in favour of the importance of play's socializing function in preschool period.

4. ▬

Write your own definition of play.

5. ▬

Exemplify the role of plays in the development of child's personality by bringing three relevant examples.

6. ▬

Plan a learning situation where play is the main form of activity.

Chapter 2

The Role of Play in Child's Development

2.1 The Relationship Play-Development

General conceptual aspects There is a strong connection between the child's development under all its aspects and play. Since birth, the child's knowledge of the world is achieved through play. In the beginning the play's role is pretty inaccurate, therefore psychologists have called it non-play because children handle toys instinctively. Gradually, it becomes better shaped. Play, as childhood specific activity is a form of child behaviour based on imagination and its specific features: vivacity, superficiality, illusions.

V. Stern mentions in his studies, the determinant factor for the emergence of play – *the bluntness of the child's universe*, determined by his poor knowledge experience. To fill that blank, the child appeals to play, as a compensatory remedy. The expansion towards the unknown is carried out by means of playing because playing gives the child the possibility to turn to a unknown world in a gradual manner without feeling frustrated by the disadvantages of ignorance. In order to understand properly the way play functions in childhood, we need to understand the evolution of physical and mental development of a child. If we consider human development in general, a child development in particular, we refer to some compulsory steps one has to take on the way to adulthood. These steps or stages contain periods, of development, progress and evolution, as well as mental, physical, moral and social changes. Human development involves passing from one stage to the other based on several self-determining factors of serious complexity.

Therefore, development can be analysed from the perspective of various sciences: anthropology, sociology, education, ecology, biology, psychology and pedagogy. The research area is cover by psychology. Specialists have investigated child development by various methods, from types of influences

exerted on children starting with the first interactions between parents and their children, to ways of raising and educating children from various cultures. Psychology turned this rigorous analysis into theories. One of these theories is the theory of social learning which brings forth the principle based on which child development is determined by the connection he has to other people and these connections would have major influence upon his evolution. Another theory is implemented by the psychoanalytic approach. In child development studies we also find elements of structuralism which emphasizes the biological maturing of children and the sequential development of their cognition. Each theory had its adherents who made significant contribution to the development of such theories, facilitating the access to knowledge of human psychology from various perspectives but with a mutual role in practical educational activity.

The Role of social interaction in child development. The child's personality and behaviour are developed based on social interaction. Social interaction is a form of constraint with the following characteristics: reward and punishment, imitation, identification with certain models, assuming social roles and compliance with expectancy. Throughout his development, the child takes part in various social processes: social perception and understanding of human behaviours, assuming of social roles and behaviours associated to them, verbal and non-verbal social communication. The first social relations established by a child are with the parents, especially the bond between a child and the mother, which is stabilized around the age of seven months. The mother uses play when she interacts with her child, using all sorts of noisy toys, by means of which she tries to catch the baby's attention, either using word games to comfort the baby, or just to play with it through various comforting gestures: continuous touch of chin, caressing the cheeks, tickling, gymnastics, The child and the parents get used to one another as this interaction develops, and it gradually it turns into attachment.

Ways of social interaction. The child's first contact to the outside world occurs through the interaction with the parents, conducted in various ways: in the feeding, care and communication process, through gestures, mimicry and words of the person who takes care of him, usually the mother. Simple games such as: gestures, handling of objects can offer the bay a varied but also incentive experience: the smile, the lifting and holding in the arms, tickling, simple games, and communication of any type. The child starts to acquire his first knowledge of the surrounding world based on the parent various behaviours in relationship to the child. Human interaction brings about reactions that lead to behaviour stimulation and learning. One has noticed the child's tendency to react stronger to people than to other stimuli from his background such as daylight or sounds (Schaffer, 2005). Humans are very sociable compared to other species, they don't lead their life in complete isolation and need social stimulation to develop their innate abilities. Since birth, the child shows a strong desire to socialize, according to researchers. Studies have proven the existence of children's innate tendencies (Hayes Nicky, Sue Orell, 2003), such as smiling when looking at something that resembles a human face. When the baby is very little, this tendency is a response to very simple stimuli (such as an oval piece of cardboard with two points, which resembles a human face), but as the baby grows up and its experience amplifies, it doesn't react to such a picture anymore, the increases have to be more detailed. After the age of 5 month, the baby will react to a more realistic image, such as a photograph. Besides the basic tendency, which the baby learns to amplify as it grows up, the attachment occurs in its life that appears to be a form of biological "programming" (IRM)[5] which develops and becomes more complex as the child acquires new experiences by interacting with the social environment.

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[5]IRM, innate releasing mechanisms (genetic programming, teleonomical mechanisms).

Another important manner of interaction between children and adults is the imitation of gestures and mimicry by repeated observation, exercise and practice. It has been noticed that very little children imitate their mothers' facial expressions. In daily childcare, mother usually uses exaggerated facial expressions when she talks to the baby. Therefore, a few weeks old babies engage in interactions with their mothers and imitate their facial expressions, which is particularly important in their evolution. The phenomenon of transition from contagion to communication occurs at this point. The main types of imitation seen at babies (12-21 days) are opening the mouth and thrusting out the tongue but as they grow up, their ability to imitate and respond to stimuli become more and more complex. Crying, for instance, can be regarded as means of communication, an adaptation to environment, a way of asking for help. Mothers develop an ability of understanding the baby's cry, distinguishing between cases of hunger, pain or just need for affections (to be held in the mother's arms) etc. One of the most important manners of communication between a mother and her child is the visual contact. Scientists dealing with this issue have observed that eyeball dilatation, a way of unconsciously signalling affection, is also a signal transmitted by children to their parents after the age of four months. Before this age, their eyeballs dilate at the sight of anyone. This aspect reveals two things: firstly, that people interacting with the baby will receive other messages besides the smile, showing that the child takes pleasure in the interaction and secondly, that after the age of four months children start having preferences in terms of people around them. Thus, non-verbal communication is the basis of attachments between children and parents, representing a primary experience which will be useful for future social interactions. We can notice that at birth, the child is provided with a set of behaviours that will guide the development of social interactions. An innate reflex is the Moro reflex: when hearing a loud noise in the proximity (hitting the table, for example), the child reacts automatically, stretches the arms than

cuddles, starts crying with eyes wide open. These types of reflexes are found in new-borns, though they completely disappear after 5 days. The Moro reflex is used to test the normal functioning of the new-born's brain and body, a useful answer to a stimulus that frightens, resulting in bond with the mother. It is also a stimulus for the mother, who will be more protective with her child. Basically, there are three ways of encouraging the child's socializing activity: imitation, identification and direct education. Imitation involves copying an action or a set of actions and it allows the child to acquire physical skills very quickly and efficiently. The baby plays by adopting social roles and imitating the adults whom he has seen in these roles. All these are part of the process by which children learn behaviours that they can use later on. The child can learn more by imitation than by direct learning.

Observation based learning. The child often learns based on the observations he unconsciously acquires. Though this process begins with imitation, learning is rapidly internalized and the child comes to identify himself with the person or the role. Identification takes longer time than imitation and it is believed that the learning of social roles, such as learning the role of gender takes place by identification. Therefore, theoreticians of social learning believe that models are very important in the development; role models offer guidance to children and teach them proper behaviours throughout their lives. Researchers have conducted a series of experiments to investigate imitation at children. They have found out that not all models are equally imitated; children have imitated models they considered similar to them, choosing their models according to their own gender. Researchers have also investigated the extent to which positive stimulation (such as praise or encouragement) can influence learning by imitation. If an aggressive behaviour is ignored or punished, it is less probable that it would repeat but aggressive actions with satisfactory consequences upon the aggressor have a higher probability of recurrence. On the other hand,

warmth and closeness in a relationship can have positive effects on the identification process. It has been noticed that boys with affectionate relations with their fathers, gain higher scores at masculinity tests than boys whose relationship is more reserved. The same situation is valid for girls too: the tighter the relationship with the mother is, the stronger the identification with womanhood is. Children learn a lot by imitation and identification but also by direct reactions of adults. They are a good manner of preparing children to behave according to social demands. Self-reinforcements and punishments are often seen as emotional reinforcements (pride and satisfaction in the first case, shame and blame in the second). Depression is also a part of self-administered set of punishments. Appraisal standards are learnt by modelling, especially from parents or other people with influence on the child. They are learnt in childhood and later on changed due to the interaction between standards and performance. Each society shapes the child's behaviour by rewards (praise and adult attention, considered a reward by children), but also by socially adequate punishments. It is preferable that the types of punishment used by parents would develop a strong feeling of consciousness in children[6]. Psychological punishment seems efficient by generating a strong consciousness in children, apologizing is interiorized, so the child comes to regret his deeds and feels guilty and responsible, but only provided that the adults give them some explanation on their expectancies and rules to be followed. If we consider physical punishment, its only effect is the fear of being discovered and not the development of a strong consciousness[7]. Explanation and communication seem to encourage the child's social behaviour.

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[6]In 1938, Mackinnon showed that students who proved to have a strong consciousness (haven`t cheated in any test when they had the opportunity) had suffered from psychological punishment from their parents and those who cheated, had suffered from physical punishment.

[7]V., Preda, (1998), *Delincvenţa juvenilă. O abordare multidisciplinară*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca.

Piaget[8], in his studies, developed an original theory on the genesis and mechanisms of thinking, called the operational theory. He delimited periods and series of intelligence operations:

- The sensorimotor period, extends from birth to two years of birth. During this period the child is concerned with coordinating actions and learning physical objects. In the first sensorimotor period, from birth, one can notice repetitive gestures that are the baby's manner of playing with its own body parts. The baby gradually discovers the body through an accidental and mechanic game which turns into skill. Thus, the baby will satisfy some of its needs, such as thumb sucking. Skills and assimilation are developed in this period by conditioning. Gradually, by the development of sensorimotor actions, the child achieves an ocular-motor coordination, which will cause the handling game of objects such as: touching objects, taking them to the mouth, abandoning them. By this game of handling objects and by adult interference, the child makes contact to reality, with the object oriented world, which he will eventually assimilate. Parents communicate with children through gestures; the parent uses words in association to the object and the child responds through gestures. For instance, the parent placed the bunny on the shelf. When the child is asked "Where is the bunny?", he points with the finger to the shelf. The child acquires knowledge and learns by interaction with his parents and adults and the leading activity is play under various forms. By playing, the child becomes able to find new means not only by exterior or material exploration but also by interiorized combinations, which lead to understanding or intuition. For instance, a child placed in front of a half-

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[8] Piaget is known worldwide and is an inspiration in fields like psychology, sociology, education, epistemology, economy and law. He published *Biology and knowledge*, *Child`s conception of the world*, *Child`s speech and thought*, *Genetic epistemology*.

opened match box with a dice in it, would try to open it, first by material exploration (specific reaction to the 5th sensorimotor period), and after the failure, the child shows a totally new reaction. He suspends the actions and examines thoroughly the situation by opening and closing the mouth, or tightens and loosens the fist to imitate the result he wants to achieve, namely a complete opening of the matchbox. Then, suddenly, the child sticks the finger through the opening and manages to open the box. These are the first signs of intelligence,

- The preoperational period, between 2 and 7 years of age, shows a child concerned with verbal qualification. If a general decentring occurs during the first eighteen months, which makes the baby consider itself an object among other objects in a universe consisting of permanent objects, spatial-temporary structured with a certain degree of objectivity, the second year of a baby's life consists of permanent objects. The sensorimotor structures are the source of future thinking operations. It means that intelligence arises from action, in general, and it changes objects and real situations. Knowledge, which at children involves active and operational assimilation, is achieved by playing. Symbolic playing or fictional game, which was unknown in the sensorimotor period, occurs now. Due to the development of perceptions and representations, children use imitation accompanied by objects, which become symbolic. This fact is possible because of development, which allows *verbal evocation* of events that don't actually happen in the present. Along with symbolic playing and drawing, the child moves from concrete representation to postponed representation, and then to thinking. J. Piaget stated that: *symbolic playing is, undoubtedly, the peak of infantile playing. It suits to the essential function played by games in a child's life more than the other two or three types of playing, that we would also take into consideration. The child is forced to adjust constantly*

to the social world of the grown-ups, whose rules and interests are exterior to him and to a physical world that he poorly understands. Therefore, he doesn't manage to satisfy the ego's affective and intellectual needs, unlike adults, for whom these needs are more or less complete. They remain unaccomplished, the smaller the child is. It is therefore necessary for the child affective and intellectual balance to benefit from an type of activity, which is not focused on adjusting to reality but the assimilation of reality to the child's ego without constraints or punishment. This is the game, which converts reality by a more or less pure assimilation to the ego's needs while imitation (when it is an aim in itself) is an more or less pure adaptation to exterior models and intelligence a balance between assimilation and adaptation. (J. Piaget, 2005). It is interesting to notice that symbolic games can be identified mainly with affective conflicts. An event from the child life will be reproduced in a play with the dolls. The child will solve the conflict more efficiently in the play than the parents have with him and the solution to the problem will be a happier one *either because the child uses with the dolls a more intelligent pedagogy than the parents', or because he integrates in play what the self/esteem prevents him from accepting at the table (to eat everything from a plate of soup, which he doesn't like, especially if the doll is the one which symbolically does it)* (J. Piaget, 2005). Any event with negative influence or consequences on the child will be reflected by the symbolic game and the outcome will be a happy one. We can notice that symbolic games are used by children for conflict solving but also to counterbalance unsatisfied needs, to discharge obedience and authority and to let off and extend the ego etc.,

- The concrete-operational period takes place between the ages of 7 and 12, when the child begins to deal with abstract concepts such as numbers,

relations and affinities. Educational activity conducted through play, will determine the child's mental development, which is a succession of three schemes. Each scheme continues the preceding one, firstly by reconstructing it at a new level and then overcoming it at a higher level. The building of sensorimotor schemes continues with the building of semiotic, thinking and inter-individual connection schemes. The internalization of such action schemes is reconstructed at a new level, the level of representations which continues with concrete operations and cooperation structures,

- The formal operational period takes place between the ages of 12 and 15. It is the period when the child begins to rationalize logically and systematically. Formal thinking is developed on restructured concrete operations by subordinating them new structures, whose development will go on throughout adolescence and the entire life (along with many other changes),

- Another perspective calls these periods: the animist infantile period, the period of magical thinking, the period of referential egocentric-syncretic thinking and the period of developing concrete thinking and later on formal-logical thinking.

The thinking operations also develop and are expressed as operations of: classification, counting, measurement, movement in time and space etc. Operations are the result of internalization and mental projection of the subject's actions. They are reversible and are coordinated with other operations. Altogether, they create overall structures. Reversibility, the ability to invert and reconstruct operations is a characteristic of operational thinking, according to Piaget. Piaget regarded intelligence as the human being's ability to adjust to the environment and to its changes. Intelligence is not acquired at once but

gradually by children, in very well defined stages. These stages, which Piaget called periods, are identical for each individual. The child learns in each stage, based on games, new forms of behaviour and develops logical thinking. Each stage is characterized by different cognitive abilities. Although certain children can move from one stage to the other in a faster pace, Piaget believes that all children have to undergo all stages in the same succession. Each stage enriches the child with new abilities different from those acquired in the previous stage. Piaget considered intelligence as a manner of development by interaction with the environment. The children act continuously upon the environment through the games they play or by observing the effect their actions have. When they think, they perform mental operations. An operation is considered any set of actions that have effects upon the environment. As the child starts possessing new abilities, they occur as cognitive structures in the child's thinking process. They are called schemes. A scheme contains all ideas, memories, abilities and associations linked to a certain set of operations. Piaget believes that cognitive thinking has arisen as a result of new schemes and extension of existing ones but with a wider applicability. As the child grows up and relates to the environment, he constantly develops and changes the schemes. The scheme is a guideline in our behaviour. Piaget believes that thinking is the result of unexpected results. He suggests that when we are capable of appealing to pre-existing schemes, we don't think at current event too much. The new usage would be outside of what Piaget called the opportunity domain of our pre-existing schemes, Piaget believes that such an event that implies the inability of applying existing schemes as usually, causes mental instability and imbalance. The attempt to correct the lack of balance is achieved by psychical equilibrium, adaptation of schemes by assimilation and adaptation until the individual is able to deal with the new situation. Assimilation is the process of amplifying the opportunity of schemes, just by their extension so that they would be useful in processing new information. In other words, *assimilation* takes place when new

information is absorbed by the scheme without significant changes in the scheme's structure. A new scheme should change its "form" to fit with the new information. Piaget called this process *adaptation*. When new information is completely different, the adaptation process could result in a new scheme, formed by dividing the existing scheme into two. Assimilation and adaptation are simultaneous and occur together, as part of the balancing process. They are the fundament of cognitive development. The first scheme of those developed by a child is the corporal scheme. It occurs when a child starts to understand the idea that certain things can be called "I" and are always present while others "Non-I" are present just sometimes. Once this scheme formed by the child's increasingly richer experience, it will gradually extend and divide by assimilation and adaptation.

The reduction of egocentrism is another central concept in Piaget's theory. It is a pretty controversial concept, because certain psychologists believe that it doesn't fit with the experimental proofs of child's sociability. The idea is that in the first four years cognition is developed by a gradual reduction of egocentrism. The main reason why the children's thinking is different from adults' thinking is their egocentrism. Egocentrism can be also reduced through playing, especially through games with rules, where children have to restrain some impulses and obey the rules of the game and the group he belongs to. According to Piaget, the baby is totally egocentric at birth, seeing the universe as a mere extension of itself. This vision gradually adjusts through playing as part of educational influence. In the first period of life, babies come to realize that objects have a continuous existence even if they aren't constantly under its attention. In other words, the baby perceives the objects' constancy and then, in the preoperational period, children have the ability to imagine things from someone else's point of view. Although Piaget accepts the idea that cognitive development is amplified by interaction with the environment, he believes that

it is a rather hereditary process because a certain type of thinking could not develop if the child is not genetically suited for it. Bias can occur earlier is the environment is extremely incentive or later if the child doesn't have many chances to explore various issues.

2.2 Premises of Personality Development Through Play at Children

The concerns to define accurately the concept of personality have been subject of interest to many psychologists and pedagogues and their interest is still vivid. Psychologists[9] define personality as "(...) *stabile element of a person's conduct; what characterizes and distinguishes one person from another one*".

Al. Roşca believes that a child's personality is unique as long as it is a non-repetitive combination of psychological traits with a high degree of stability.

Allport states that personality is the dynamic organization within an individual of psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustment to the environment.

Consequently, personality is the sum of stable elements in a person's behaviour, which distinguishes and characterizes his character, makes it a unique individual.

Since the first years of life, human beings evolve, develop and grow up under the influence of biological, psychological and social conditions which will have a unique impact on their personality. The main directions of personality development at children are distributed on physical and mental coordinates:

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[9]Sillamy, Norbert, *Dicţionar de psihologie,* Editura Univers Enciclopedic,. Bucureşti, 1998.

thorough knowledge activity, changes in their affective life, in relations and attitudes towards the environment and continuous improvement of voluntary conduct. The conditions can be favourable for the development of a child's personality and in this case the entire development is stimulated. If the conditions are unfavourable, the development can be limited. The analysis of these conditions has to be based on real situations and on the reception and assimilation potential of the above mentioned influences. The fact is that playing is essential in the development of a child's personality, thus contributing to his development as a social being. By playing, the children imitated everything that had a powerful impact on them. We should also mention that playing is represented by the child's desire to be an adult and act like an adult. Children's games grasp antagonist relations, which are development by children in a positive manner and always in their favour.

Playing develops critical thinking. If we follow the actions of a pre-schooler, we see that he operates with the significance of objects, though he relies on material substitutes (toys). Reliance on substitutes diminishes in time, playing is performed through words-denominations which symbolize objects and actions are accompanied by speaking. Thus the child goes to the wall, acts like washing the hands, comes back and says "I have washed mu hands", goes to a table, sits down, acts like eating, stands up and says "thanks for the meal". The functional development of playing and the ontogenetic development experience a self-determining development. More general mechanisms of intellectual activity are developed through playing.

2.2.1 Factors which Influence the Development of Human Personality

The evolution of human personality is the result of a relationship between hereditary and acquired factors, between interior and exterior conditions,

between an individual and a group, as well as between the individual's and the group's history. The child is hereditary gifted with certain skills which improve and develop by education and the background history.

Sigmund Freud determined the fact that the child is subjected to trauma (the birth trauma, the trauma of giving up breast feeding, the trauma of father's or mother's infidelity, trauma of another child's birth, trauma of reduced cuddling, trauma of severity and punishment) to conflict and constraints since birth. Therefore, the more the child plays, the more conflicts sprang from these traumas and contradictions will be solved, which will avoid the danger of neurotic illness. Generally, the social background is the space where the child lives and which provides certain development premises, learning and behaviour models. Family is the closest to a child and it influences the development of natural premises. It is important to know the background a child comes from, because it can explain certain behaviours. A child raised in a favourable affective environment develops as an autonomous, confident person, feeling that the parents support him in any situation. In family, the child also learns to get and to give love and to have a socially desirable behaviour. Affective indifference in a family leads to lack of orientation, insecurity in behaviour and lack of confidence in humans. Thus, family is for children an affective environment very necessary for their harmonious physical and mental development. The children's emancipation is the result of the influence parents have on their children. Emancipation is actually the children's desire of being like their parents. Games undoubtedly reveal this aspect. They show us the relationship between parents and children.

Psychologist Albert Adler develops in his observations the idea that conflicts between parents and children are projected in their games. Children find compensations and satisfactory solutions in games. Limitations and obstacles from real life can be found in children's games. Parents can follow the

children's playing and can correct the attitudes towards their children by adapting other educational methods. But no matter how optimal the relations in a family are, it cannot provide all children's development needs. Consequently, kindergarten fills up and broadens the education received in families through activities organized and conducted by trained teaching staff.

Kindergarten attendance supports socializing activities and this new background brings about changes in the child's social relationships: increases the number of reports with adults and other children, more varied quality of relations, emergence of the need to adapt behaviour to the needs of other peers. From a psychosocial point of view, education plays a key role in the development of the mental traits and the integrative-adaptive behaviours.

Kindergarten has all educative means to intensify the relationship between the child and other people (adults and children).For instance, visits can be organized, where the child plays the role of host and guest, like celebrating a birthday (with activities such as inviting guests, organizing entertainment games), participation in community actions, activities and games where children talk to each other, cooperate, compete, accept and help each other. A pre-schooler who attends kindergarten benefits from an organized, conscious and guided education in order to exploits his full potential and to stimulate new acquisitions. Moreover, the entire kindergarten activity is focused on a peculiarity of childhood – playing. Based on each child's individual traits and on the conditions leading to development, capable of changing the original structure of a child so as to become compatible with social demands. The child lives in two worlds: one belonging to the principle of satisfaction, and on the principle of reality. Playing is part of autistic illusions; it represents unsatisfied wishes in the real life and a world of endless possibilities. This is a real world for children, as real as the other one, where there are constraints and interdictions – the adult world. Playing makes this subjective and autistic

childhood world to be as real as the objective reality itself. The child steps into the real world by means of education guided by adults. The child can accede to the knowledge of reality only through the relationship system child-adult, firstly parents then teachers.

Therefore, it is important that kindergarten teachers know the level of children's mental development when they enter the group as well as the social background they come from, their medical history, social and family conditions etc.

Factors that play the most important role in shaping of personality are:

- Neuro-functional maturation,

- Rich and varied stimulations offered by kindergarten,

- The role of playing as fundamental activity,

- Interrelating to peers of the same age,

- More complex relationships with the family and the others.

The following personality components emerge and act under the influence of these factors:

a) Initial manifestation of abilities in those with native premises such as:

- Special receptiveness to certain types of stimuli,

- Low sensory thresholds,

- Attraction for activities related to skills that will emerge later on. The manifestation areas are: drawing, music, choreography, gymnastics and foreign languages.

b) Gifted children can already achieve significant results.

c) The development of character is made under the influence of family (*the seven years of education in the family*) and kindergarten.

Kindergarten offers the premises for the formation of character through:

- Building voluntary adjustment,
- Crystallization of fundamental feelings especially towards the parents but also towards the others,
- The ability of being responsive to their demands and to the models they offer,
- The development of primary moral consciousness.

Consequently, the premises for character traits are developed under the influence of these factors:

- Respect for the others,
- Self-confidence,
- Courage,
- Perseverance.

We identify the development of structural aspects in the child's personality on the following dimensions: temper, abilities and character.

2.2.2 Temperament, Education, Play

The temperament, as personality side contains a series of innate peculiarities and features that cannot be much altered and are important premises for the process of socio-moral becoming of an individual. Temperament is the energetic-dynamical dimension of personality and it is expressed by the features of intellectual and affective activity but also by the exterior behaviour (motor

activity and especially speaking). There has been extensive research on the classification of temperament on different criteria but an exhaustive classification has not been completed. Consequently, it is difficult to rank a child in a certain pattern. We can distinguish temperamental differences by observing children in various moments and performing different actions. Some are more active and exuberant, other more restrained and lethargic, some are very active and assertive, others are melancholic and meditative, and some overcome psychically any failure while others are very easily discouraged.

Considering these simple observations, we can intervene in the child's education. Energetic, restless, initiative and knowledge-oriented children should be given the opportunity to channel this energy in a positive and creative direction. For instance, their involvement in movement games can stop their impulsive urges and channel their energy to follow the rules of the game. Rule games demand a certain behaviour which would temper aggressive behaviour, guiding temperamental children on a whole new path. When a child has a melancholic temperament with shy, anxious behaviour, the kindergarten teacher should have an encouraging attitude and stimulate him in games that suit his abilities and encourage him. Patience, understanding and delicacy are required in working with these children. Any aggressive action can lead to discouragement and abandonment. The magic of games will bring about the reduction of shyness and spontaneous behaviour. Pedagogic skills are required to get closer to a melancholic child. Any little progress should be appreciated and the teacher should engage these children in proper games and activities in order to develop their courage to socialize. Thus, selecting a shy child for the position of group leader will increase his confidence in own powers and lead to more courageous behaviour. Pedagogic skills, stimulation and encouragement should be used with children who have a powerful but instable temperament, who have initiative and energy but get discouraged very easily.

2.2.3 Abilities and Education

Abilities are part of our personality and are developed on innate features. They are psycho-physiological operational features which ensure speed and efficiency of general mental and motor activities (sensory, psychomotor, and intellectual): intelligence and diligence, as well as specific (plastic, literary, sports). Thus, any feature or mental process becomes attitude if viewed in terms of efficiency. An isolated attitude cannot ensure success in an important activity, but mixed or combined abilities can. For instance, good thinking can hide the lack of information for a period, but in the end high intelligence will not compensate for lack of information, poor skills and lack of abilities. All are self-determining and contribute to the evolution of the child's personality towards his own fulfilment.

Abilities are developed through practice under the influence of educational acts. They are the premises for talent identification and development of exquisite abilities. Besides a trained eye, various manifestation conditions are required to identify abilities. An important manner of identification is represented by games, where children act naturally and spontaneously. An interiorized child can impress us during a game, proving good skills and abilities in a field or another. Playing is a manner of identifying exceptional abilities but also a way to train and practice them, because they increase motivation, enthusiasm and the children's desire of achievement.

2.2.4 Shaping Characters

Unlike temperament, character refers to features deeply rooted in the individual's hereditary characteristics and they aim the socio-moral superstructure of personality, the human being's quality of social entity. When we talk about character, we most certainly involve a moral standard and issue a

valuable judgement.

Etymologically, the term *character* comes from Old Greek, meaning *seal, pattern,* and with reference to human beings it means features, lifestyle. This notion refers to the deep structure of personality and it is expressed by behaviours, which are easily predictable by virtue of their frequency. Thus, we know for instance with certain probability how will a child react in case of failure, if he will resist to a temptation (toy) or if in his spare time will prefer reading to playing.

The process of shaping a child's character is a long-term process and involves educational skills, pedagogic interventions, explanations and desirable behavioural models. Character building starts at birth, initiated by family and continued in kindergarten and school.

Playing contributes to character shaping, by playing children restructure their behaviour. The content of rule games is focused on norms related to relationships between peers; their main content is related to the behavioural rules practiced by adults. The child steps into the evolved universe of superior forms of human activity through playing (Winnicott, D. W., 2004). Games teach children desirable behaviours which they have to follow during playing. By playing, a child identifies the difference between good and bad, beautiful and ugly, pleasant and unpleasant. The kindergarten teacher has to support and stimulate carefully and perseveringly the process of character building, through consistent, convergent, continuous and permanent actions, channelling constructively the children's affection. By playing, the child gets to know his own value, becomes aware of the role he plays in the system of social relationships. Positive punishment and reprehensions will be carefully applied not to hurt their dignity and the child's sensitive ego. Undeserved rewards will be avoided, as well as those which create confusion in understanding equity.

Children will instinctually perceive them as undeserved by what psychologist call *the syndrome of bitter candy.*[10]

The child's mental development does not yet crystalize and define typical personality traits, therefore we cannot talk about character in the true meaning of the word. Character traits are learnt and developed by education, by social experience like games with real life subjects. The character traits will shape and later on become long-lasting and specific. What can be achieved and must be achieved through games, are those models of moral behaviour that a child has to interiorize and follow. The practice of attitudes by various games that require courage, hard-work, discipline, empathy, tolerance leads to the education of moral behaviours, training inner and outer discipline, development of positive character traits.

2.2.5 Defining Behaviours

Every human being has certain defining behavioural characteristics. For instance, certain children control themselves very well when experiencing an unpleasant situation at school, while others get angry and have nervous breakdowns, other are hostile and defend themselves aggressively. Researches in the field of child psychology explain these behavioural structures as personality traits. Each trait relates to a certain personality component, each component is independent from others and characterizes a feature, for instance sociability. The followers of this theory, such as (Schaffer, 2005) claim that on a behavioural level, a trait is indicated by the "*predisposition to answer to a variety of stimuli in the same manner*". Personality traits can be distinguished by a few aspects: persistent and stable behaviour. When we describe the

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[10]Verza, E., *Psihologia vârstelor*, Editura Hyperion XXI, 1993.

personality, we face the risk of alleging the existence of a trait starting from behaviours typical for a state of being with situational character. Personality questionnaires differentiate answers according to their typical, general and present behaviour. One of the main objectives in knowing and assessing a child's personality is predicting his behaviour in a certain situation.

In terms of child behaviour in the kindergarten, the teacher obtains most data by observing him in regular situations or in specially created ones. Playing offers numerous opportunities for observing the children's behaviour but also optimal intervention means. Observation has two stages: selection and definition of behaviour in concrete, noticeable notions (vague definitions are to be avoided) and the usage of systematic, standardized procedures. Teachers can also use technical devices to record behaviours: cassette player, video recording, camera, etc. The used observation grids ensure the systematic character of observations. They have methods of recording, ordering, and narrative or coded processing. The sampling problem occurs when it is difficult to observe all available children. Therefore, if the aim is to observe children playing in a cooperation game, we should select a sample as the study object. When analysing child behaviour, one has to take into consideration the distortive, disruptive factors (for example tiredness, teacher's subjectivity) and the assessed characteristics.

The child overcomes his innate egocentrism when playing. Role play leads to changes in the child's attitude, from the individual, infantile one to a new, adult attitude. The kindergarten teacher will be able to identify the children's personality traits and manner of behaviour as he gets to know the children better. Based on these observations, he will be able to plan the most suitable schedule of educational-formative intervention, which is required by shaping and developing the child's personality in order to be compatible to social demands.

Seminar Activities

Tasks and Applications

1. ▬

Starting from the following statement *Childhood games are the buds of a human's entire life because by their development, the man reveals the innermost traits of his being*." (F.R. Frobel) write a structural essay of 150 words.

Working time 10 minutes.

2. ▬

What is the study object of Psychopedagogy of play?

3. ▬

Explain the correlation play-learning-work-creation.

4. ▬

What is playing?

5. ▬

In pairs, decide what arguments support the statement: "*Symbolic playing is, undoubtedly, the peak of infantile playing*".

6. ▬

Give your own interpretation of the following statement: "*a system of intended or unintended, explicit or implicit actions or influences, which contribute to the formation, shaping, development and transformation of individuals' personality, irrespective of age, in order to achieve certain goals set according to present and future demands of society*".

Chapter 3

Explanatory Theories about the Nature and Functions of Play

3.1 The Complex Determinism of Play Phenomenon

Playing has determined many psychologists to study it thoroughly and to issues various theories due to the importance of play in a child's life as a natural activity which satisfies the movement desires, the spontaneous manifestation, the action and independence assertion. Starting from Haeckel's biological theory according to which ontogenesis is a repetition of phylogenetic, *Stanley Hall Granville*[11] explains that playing is a repetition of instincts and primitive forms of life, obviously a simplistic approach.

Karl Gross[12]*,* follower of the same theory sees playing as a preparatory exercise for life. He calls his theory the theory of practice or the theory of self-education.

At birth, the child has the premises of goal oriented behaviour due to inherited genetic traits. However, innate reactions are not enough to solve major problems, which the child confronts with in life. Therefore, childhood enables adaptive accumulation to a child. Adaptive accumulations are possible due to the child's behaviour, which relies on imitation. Playing is nothing else but a manner of practicing natural predispositions with the aim of growing up. Gross said: *If the development of adaptive skills to the issues of life is the main goal of our childhood, in this chain of events oriented in this manner, the most prominent place falls to playing*[13]. Although Gross discussed playing in terms of theory of practice and regarded it as an essential activity for the child's

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[11]Stanley Hall Granville, the father of development psychology, publishes *Content of children`s minds*, but his work of reference is *Adolescence*– 1904.

[12]Karl Gross shows the relationship between animal and human play in his studies *Play of Animals, A study of Animals Life and Instinct*- 1898,.*Play of Man*-1901.

[13]Apud. Elkonin, D.B, (1980).Op.cit.

development, it is still a simplistic explanation, because Gross compares the play of man to that of animals. He notices that playing is an anticipatory practice, seeing in it just the biological sense. He compares the cat's playing with the ball of thread with the child's hunting games. Gross believes that individual experiences occur based on specific experiences with hereditary origins. But it is clear that the formation of individual experiences consists of the adaptation of species related behaviour to variables of the external environment. (Leontiev, 1965).

Antón Semionovich Makarenko considered playing an important factor in the development of a child's personality. He makes an analogy between the child's behaviour while playing and social behaviour, believing that a child will behave in real life exactly the same as in play. Playing has therefore the ability to reveal primary instincts which will be oriented towards social requirements through didactic games.

Makarenko makes associations between the child's play and human activity - work, noticing the differences between the two types of activity:

- both activities require the involvement of intellectual effort. In terms of social human activity, play becomes action without goal, becomes boring, irrelevant without intellectual effort,

- both activities infer affective and emotional involvement. The child's playing and work bring unexpected satisfaction when they are carried out with interest and passion, and the results of playing and work bring satisfaction due to the successful accomplishment of the task,

- child's playing and adult's profession involve responsibility: towards the objects they act with to achieve their goals and objectives. Like adults who are considerate about the tools they use for working, children take care of

their toys. Just like adults who follow a protocol of social activity; children follow the rules of the game and have certain behaviour while playing.

Playing accustoms the child to physical and intellectual effort and in this manner prepares him for the later social activity. Playing and social activity have joint elements which involve physical and intellectual efforts as well as overcoming certain difficulties and barriers. Therefore the children's playing activities should be very well prepared and coordinated by the kindergarten teacher in order to develop behaviour oriented towards desirable social activity.

K. D. Uşinski [14] stated the importance of playing for children due to the independence which it gives the child. He strongly supports the necessity that the adult would not interfere in the child's playing, because adult intervention might limit their independence. The only adult involvement in playing should be the supply with materials, objects and toys required by the game.

Lewis William Stern [15] poaches some of Gross's ideas about playing, but makes a few addenda. A first one refers to the anticipatory character of maturing the child's abilities. The second addendum contradicts Gross's ideas about the anticipatory theory, which underlined the fact that playing in itself is a manner of showing various instincts and skills. Playing is just an instinctive manifestation; it is enriched by social accumulations. The third addendum made by Stern refers to the fact that when a child imitates something, he doesn't just follow passively the game pattern, but certain bias determined by interior conditions of development and differentiation. Stern suppresses the progress role of imitation, putting it on account of internal tendencies, of instincts.

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[14] Chirimbu, Sebe, Vargolici, Barbu Prospects and Challenges of Interdisciplinarity in the twentieth century (volume coordinators), Ed. Stef, 2011.

[15] Lewis William Stern, *Human Personality*, was published in 1923. Stern issues the first definition of personality: multishaped, dynamic unity and at the same time a sort of ideal for each individual, without being able to reach it.. In 1912 (or 1911 as some believe) he "invents" the IQ.

Herbert Spencer[16] places imitation at the base of playing, but releases the theory of energy surplus. This theory states that children have a surplus of energy that has to be spent for the child's health. This theory cannot be valid because children play even when they are tired.

Karl Buhler[17] is the follower of functional satisfaction theory. The notion is defined by the pleasure or delight playing brings in a child's life and also by the anticipatory joy of the result. Functional satisfaction occurs in the period of skill development, when any game brings pleasure by its improvement. The theory of functional pleasure is also unrealistic because children play also games that don't always bring just pleasure and satisfaction. Playing contains elements that don't bring just pleasure, sometimes a child loses in front of peers, injures himself, runs and falls, scratches or hits himself. All these events cause him inconvenience but the child doesn't give up playing; on the contrary he continues his play.

Sigmund Freud[18] interprets playing at children under the influence of psychoanalytic theory. He is not concern with the theory of playing; he approaches the issue of playing out of the necessity of reaching beyond the principle of satisfaction to traumatic neurosis. Freud assigns playing explanations from the theory of repressed tendencies. The psychodynamic theory of development explains playing as a means of releasing repressed emotions. Children use playing to explore and control their own experiences, feelings, exteriorizing their fears and anxieties in a secure and protective situation. Playing can be considered a defence mechanism against spiritual

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[16]In 1855, Spencer wrote "Principles of Psychology " where he explored a theory of the mind as biological part of the body. This mmodel considers intelligence something that develops slowly as response to the physical environment. It is a different evolutionary perspective on the origin of man.

[17]Karl Buhler, in his book *The Child`s Mental Development* (according to Elkonin, 1980).

[18]Sigmund Freud was called the father of psycho-analysis. He discovered the main topics of psycho-analysis and introduced gradually psycho-analysis as therapy for neurosis.

issues and a way to control behaviour.

Anna Freud[19] believes that playing doesn't have the status of object by itself, but acts for ego activities and fantasies underlying them. These activities derive from one of the instincts or they possess pulsating energies. Children games originate in imaginative group activities of oedipal period (the Oedipus complex[20]); they determine the evolution of symbolic expressions sometimes materialized in aggressive tendencies (defence, competition etc.). These manifestations are governed by inflexible rules which a person has to obey; a child cannot successfully take part in them before acquiring a certain adaptation to reality and tolerance to frustration. Excellence and pleasure are determined by the genetic heritage; the development of a child's personality through playing will be determined by native giftedness and the integrity of motor apparatus. Anna Freud underlined that important in group games are positive engagement, controlled aggressiveness and ambition.

Alfred Adler[21] explains playing by the theory of inferiority complex. The child satisfies his complex through playing. The feeling of helplessness felt by the child is compensated by the function of power and dominance which he finds in playing. The theory contradicts reality; in real life playing is more complex than the author of this theory foreshadowed it. He also considers that playing determines the child's preparation for the future. Games are challenging auxiliaries of education. Playing develops imagination and handiness by

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[19]In a very clear style, the author presents the theory of defense mechanisms and then she insists on the defense operations which the Ego sets into movement to avoid inconvenience, anxiety and by means of which it controls impulsive behaviour, feelings, emergencies (denial by fantasy, denial by word and act, restrain of Ego, identification with the aggressor).

[20]The nuclear complex of human psychic was discovered by Freud based on his own self-analysis. This aspect is defined as: *the son`s etoric attraction for his mother and hostility towards the father, whom he wants to replace, surpress.* There is also a negative version of the complex, when erotic attraction is oriented towards the parent of the same gender.

[21]Alfred Adler (1879-1937), was Freud`s students and supporter of psycho-analytic psychology.

structuring the relationship between child and his environment but also by exercising the feeling of social communion. Playing favours the child's mental development but it is also determined by this development. Another factor which occurs in play is the fact that there are few games which don't favour at least one of these factors: preparation for life, feeling of communion, desire to command, to dominate. Playing determines the development of creative spirit which potentially exists in a child.

Maria Montessori[22] brings positive aspects in explaining play, showing its formative valences on the child's development. Her principle is unilateral, insisting just on training senses and less on intellectual-creative development.

P. H. Leshaft (cited by Elkonin, 1980), insists on the theory of play as preparatory exercise for life. He also insists on the formative and challenging role of adult guidance in play with the aim of developing the children's innate features. Play is an imitation exercise which tries to develop and train him for the real life.

A. N. Leontiev, Russian school psychologists, launches a new theory according to which play is a fundamental activity with decisive role in the child's evolution and development. It consists of reproducing real life in childhood representations. Play is the transfer of real life into imaginary based on changing reality, adaptation of aspirations, tendencies and desires. Play polarizes other activities from a child's life, therefore it is considered the dominant activity in terms of timing and share, but also in terms of efficiency because it brings about major changes in the child's mental state of mind.

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[22]Maria Montessori (1870–1952) was an italian doctor and pedagogue. She developed a special method for teaching very young children, called the Montessori Method. She built schools which applied her method all over the world (Montessori Schools).

Édouard Claparède[23] stated that: *Playing is the only atmosphere in which his psychological being can breathe and also act consequently. Asking ourselves why a child plays is like asking ourselves why he is a child; we cannot picture childhood without laughter and its play.* His theory originates in the biological apprehension on play, still he mentions that unlike animals, children don't train their instincts but their motor and mental functions. Play is firstly determined by the child's needs, and secondly on the degree of organic development. Play is seen as a development, expansion agent of the personality development.

J. Chateau (1970)[24] explains play as a triggering mechanism for play behaviour which awakes the personality, allowing the human being to unchain from the surrounding world and anticipate superior behaviour. For Chateau playing is an activity which trains attitudes, interiorizes life conducts and develops the moral profile. The child has no other way of stepping out than by play. Playing clears the differences between the children's and adults' position. Games contribute to the child's self-assertion and each game is a proof of will, a school of volitional behaviour, an improvement of personality.

Piaget[25] investigated the connection between the evolution of play and the development of thinking. He believed that the level of a child's development can be partly deducted through playing. He elaborated three main stages of playing activities:

- Practice play – emerges in the sensorimotor period of development. The emphasis is laid in practice and movement control and on exploring things by observation and touching. Playing at children contains many repetitive

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[23]Édouard Claparède, *Psihologia copilului şi pedagogia experimentală*, EDP, Bucureşti, 1975, p. 60.

[24]J. Chateau, *Copilul şi jocul*, Ed. Didactică şi Pedagogică, Bucureşti, 1970.

[25]Piaget, J., (2005), *Psihologia copilului*, Editura Cartier, Bucureşti.

movements which result from the pleasure of proving the mastery of skills involved,

- Symbolic plays – occur in the preoperational period. The child uses phantasy and produces something real in the play; he is happy when he uses and object as symbol for another one,

- Rule plays – occur in operational periods. The child's thinking processes become logical and playing involves the usage of rules and procedures.

J. Piaget believes that playing is adaptation, namely an expression of the process of assimilation; the child tries to understand the surrounding world and change it in order to suit their own understanding and experience. Play, at its sensorimotor origin, is just an assimilation of reality to the ego. According to Piaget, essential forms of play are the exercise play, symbolic plays and rule plays. By all these forms of playing, children assimilate reality to their own activity, ensuring the change of reality for their own needs. The most important function of play is the adaptation function, which is fulfilled by assimilation and accommodation; assimilation of reality to ego and accommodation by imitation of ego to reality. Thus, play acquires a reactive, but also creative character and the balance between these two phenomena is based on intelligence. For Piaget, symbolic play is egocentric thinking in its rawest form. The play's fundamental function is to defend the ego against forced accommodation to reality. The child is constantly asked to adapt to parents' demands whose interests and rules remain exterior; thus play changes reality according to the needs of the child's own ego. Imitation is an accommodation more or less changed to exterior patterns and intelligence is the balance between assimilation and accommodation. The child uses speaking to adapt socially. Piaget also has deficiencies in explaining play, meaning that too little importance is given to play in the development of thinking.

Erikson[26] (1963) stated: "*The child's play is the infantile form of human ability to face experience by creating model situations and by dominating reality through experiment and planning*".

V ĝotski (1967) considers playing the main factor of general development. The author developed the theory of *maximal development area* according to which an area of proximal development is amplified through play. The child can operate at a higher level than his normal age and it is considered a way of assessing the child's development potential at a certain given point, through the observation of differences between playing and usual behaviour.

He mentions that playing is a fundamental type of activity at preschool age. V ĝotski thinks that:

- play occurs due to unachievable tendencies and to a child's impulse of fulfilling his pleasures immediately,

- play is marked by the specific character created by imaginary situations, which involve transfer of significance from one object to the other and actions which reproduce real adult actions in a general and shortened from;

- any play has rules; they are the rules are self-eliminations and interior self-determination,

- play operates with significance, movement occurs in the semantic field but also outside it,

- play constantly creates situations which force the child to act against impulses by subordination to rules,

- play is a source of development.

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[26]Erikson, Erik H., *Childhood and Society.* New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1950. Erikson developed the model of psycho-social perosnality development.

Jerome S. Bruner [27] (1983) considers play the main way of developing physical and mental abilities of the child. The child's creative potential is improved by playing and motivation for learning increases. Playing contributes to the development of life experience by progressive experimenting and complex acquisitions. It also contributes to problem solving and understanding the manner of using tools.

M. Taiban (1970) shows the importance of play in a child's preparation for life. By playing, children get used to the environment, acquire knowledge, train their skills which he will use creatively. The child comes to understand the relationships between phenomena, their cause and the significance of human activity.

If the child acquires a rich experience through playing, he will be able to fit in socially more easily, because *play is a way to reproduce real life in its most direct form – action.*

Play is the way a child controls his impressions and experiences and adjusts them to varied contexts facilitated by play. It creates a bridge between childhood and future social relations by developing understanding, which will facilitate a flexible social adjustment to various social conveniences.

The educational value of play is undeniable; it determines the child's physical and mental evolution. The variety of games practice by children will prepare them for school. Didactic games are a valuable manner of training and education; they can be an efficient method in the teaching-educational process which accompanies other educational methods. They can also be considered a way of organizing the child's activities and life.

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[27] Jerome S. Bruner, *Procesul educației intelectuale,* Editura Științifică, București, 1976.

Ursula Şchiopu (1970) develops interesting and valuable ideas about play, showing that play are the fundamental formative and dominant activity in childhood. She points out the resemblance to human activity. Playing prepares the child for life because *childhood is a sort of vast and richly ornamented antechamber of work.*

Play is the activity which forms and shapes intelligence but contributes to the development of thinking and shapes the character and temperament.

Play is a manner of energetic recovery and active rest.

The children's play is the field of identifying their psychological, intellectual and personality related abilities, the most important aspects of a child's sociability. The adult can interfere and polish them so as to develop the child according to innate bias.

Play is through its functions and intrinsic values a school of life for the child. It stimulates the ability to live passionately each moment and stage of the game; it determines the refraining of instinctual impulses by obeying rules and training perseverance in finishing the game.[28]

Dima Silvia (1997) identified play as play activity which challenges and stimulates the child to perform complex activities by engaging all his skills and abilities.

Krauss[29] and other specialists (1999/2000) have identified other theories related to play, some of them similar to the above presented ones.

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[28]F.Brown, Play Work. In A. Brook, S. Dodds, Jarvis, P. & Olusoga, Y. Perspectives on play. Learning for life. London: Pearson Longman, 2009, p.28.

[29]Krauss şi Cyril J. Barber, Robert M. Krauss, in *O introducere în studii teleologice: Ghid pentru studenţi.* (*An Introduction To Theological Research*: *A Guide for College and Seminary Students,* University Press of America, 2000).

- *The theory of energy release.* This theory explains how to release the surplus of energy which the child has to disperse. This fact happens through play,

- *The theory of play instinct* It has been observed after an analysis of man and animals that both species have certain innate abilities and instincts which can be reoriented and shaped by education. One of these instincts is represented by the mood to play,

- *The theory of cleanness (catharsis)*. Psychologists explain that people generally are driven by instincts which are initially considered unacceptable and aggressive for a life in the community. Play is the only way of getting rid of these negative genetic loads in a peaceful manner,

- *The Theory of exercise*. After birth, the child steps into a hostile world and therefore he needs temporal and spatial adaptation. This adaptation is made by playing, as a,

- *The Theory of recreation.* Playing is a way of preventing boredom and of spending time by doing something pleasant,

- *The Theory of apparent satisfaction.* Mostly, the reality we live in does not satisfy us and therefore playing is for us a manner of repression and elimination of unpleasant events. Playing offers the possibility to equip oneself with enormous powers and to change reality according to one's own wishes,

- *The theory of ego's expansion.* Playing gives the child the opportunity to experiment, learn and process data which will be useful in the future,

- *The theory of creativity development*. Irrespective of its form, play is based on phantasy and one's ability to organize, model and create.

3.2 The Play Phenomenon in Current Context

Certain theories are acceptable, others should be amended, but it should be kept in mind that play make a significant contribution to the development of a child's personality. The child's activity is a consumption of energy aiming at the acquisition of new experiences for the development of mental processes. We pay attention to the educational function of games if we channel all childhood energy which is manifested in play and adapt its exterior layout to educational goals. Educational plays are characterized by:

- Well stated goal,
- Important significance for the child,
- Real-world representation,
- Self-evaluation of achievements.

Symbols have a coherent value in collective role plays and the action asks for new attitudes and behaviours. Roles, as easy as they are, improve cooperation and develop the affective projection (attraction, affinity, affective attention). Play bears training, stimulation and activating functions upon the child's innate mental resources.

The principles of playing:

Play as integrated part of childhood is based on certain principles which bring about changes in the child's personality and behaviour:

- *Creates good mood.* Each play should try to meet this principle. Children play on their own or with their mates for a long time because they like it and feel happy while doing it. Children repeat their favourite games without getting bored. Good mood must be felt by all children and irony and discomfort should be totally avoided,

- *Frees creative energy.* We have seen that the child releases and consumes a lot of mental (concentration, thorough thinking, guessing) and physical energy (running, jumping, etc.) while playing. An efficient game will convert this energy into creative energy through the activation of formative variables,

- *Leads to understanding the reality.* Children face reality while playing, they act trying to understand it, change it and to adapt to it. Playing favours the relationship with reality; by playing the child deals with impressions and other things that concern him,

- *Determines the children's act of socializing.* The child has to make contact with other children when playing. The play by its character favours natural, obvious relationships, with no restraints and inhibitions. The atmosphere promoted by playing is permissive and it influences the development of new friendships,

- *Contributes to speech training*. The child exercises his speaking abilities while playing; he imitates other children and learns new phrases. The expressiveness of speech is developed by playing, according to various roles played by the child. The children take over verbal phrases by imitating the adults, based on the role they play. The development of speaking skills is achieved also by using paraverbal elements (tone, rhythm, intonation) or nonverbal elements (mimicry, gestures, behaviour),

- *Develops creativity.* The beauty of playing lays in the fact that it transcends reality; playing is based on phantasy and the unreal. Games allow children to activate their imagination, change roles, conditions, premises, events, place and time according to their own desires. Children find freedom in their games, because there everything is possible und achievable; they have the opportunity to activate the impossible in a

possibly imaginary situation. Playing develops creativity by activating the creative imagination,

- *Stimulates thinking* and the comprehension of objects and phenomena. The freedom typical for play situations allows children to experiment on a wide range of situations; some are taken over by imitation, others absolutely imaginary. The child is placed in various, sometimes conflict situations and he has to find real or imaginary solutions to move to the next level. The child has to judge, analyse, make discriminations, and make an appeal to memory as well as to adapt unknown elements to a unknown situation. The child has to activate all thinking processes and find solutions to the problems and situations created while playing. He activates and develops all mental processes while playing and comes to know his own abilities and understand his own feelings,

- *Develops attitudes.* Group play involves someone's adaptation of wishes and aspirations to the group's needs. Children establish various relationships when playing, they get to know each other better , they know their weak and strong points by comparison to others, try to overcome their limitations, set hierarchies based on principles followed by all participants, accept and respect their informal leader. All members are individually and actively involved in play, but they all make a significant joint contribution,

- *Develops abilities.* The way a group is formed and the manner a game is carried out are strongly influenced by the participants' needs and mental-physical resources. Each participant wants to step up in the group and show what he can do best; the roles are taken according to the participants' abilities, in an unconscious manner; therefore the child will give his best. The complexity of the game determines children to activate all and their

talent inside the group and they will also stimulate their abilities and skills during group playing.

Play becomes the goal of any activity and not the resulted product. Play lives out of the man's continuous seek fir uniqueness. The curiosity and impulse to self-define themselves, lead the man towards the exploration of the unknown. Through perseverance and exercise, the man will understand and conquer the play. Its specific character leaves space for developing, changing and interpreting reality. The uniqueness and pleasure of playing are determined by the fact that playing is an aimless activity without a rigorous planning.

Seminar Activities

Tasks and Applications

1. ▬

Starting from the following statement *"Education begins best – and it should begin – early in life".* (J. A. Comenius, Great Didactic) write an argumentative essay of 150 words.

Working time 10 minutes.

2. ▬

Work in teams and bring arguments in favour of the following assertion: Play, basic activity in kindergarten.

3. ▬

Bring arguments which prove that play is an adaptation, a change in the child's understanding of the world.

4. ▬

Show the formative values of play and present various theories to support your decision.

5. ▬

The principles of play activity.

6. ━

"Any progress has to emerge from a child's voluntary activity" stated Fröbel. To what extent can play contribute to the fulfilment of this goal?

Chapter 4

The Play Dimension of Educational Phenomenon

4.1 The Importance of Play in Pre-schoolers Life

Playing is considered among the perennial human activities. Playing is a typically human activity and it is extremely important in childhood for the role it plays in the development of child's personality. Playing has a universal character; it is a manifestation of behavioural features of children all around the world. When children from various cultures meet, they overcome linguistic barriers by speaking a mutual language, i.e. the language of play. Playing or the play activity is a basic activity in kindergartens, which contributes to pre-schoolers training and education. Humans discover as children what playing means and continue playing all their lives.

This aspect made specialists assign playing a polyvalent character and for children it is equally work, art, phantasy and reality.

For children, playing is life and reality in their full complexion. It is their favourite and most intense activity. By playing, the child confronts with his own self, with others, with different objects, phenomena and processes, as well as with the environment.

In modern society, playing gets new values, though in everyday speech we still identify meanings which have negative connotation.: "It's just a game!", "First work, then play!", "Are you playing with me?" etc. Performance, prestige, competitive behaviours, material reward are the main motivations for playing today, and values like phantasy and creativity receive new dimensions.

The child, due to his nature, tries to build situations full of suspense in his play. He tries to learn something new and prepare himself for life. Playing develops the child's competitive and creative spirit; children succeed in following and reaching their goals, develop their spirit of perseverance.

Children practice and try by playing various types of behaviours, test reactions to various situations and develop their attitudes. Because of their age characteristics, children cannot keep suspense for a long time, that's why they solve unpleasant situations quickly and can repeat play situations over and over again without getting bored. Playing becomes an important method of learning and development. Each game is a way of learning in the child's physical and mental development.

Playing is a potential of training and developing complete personalities *(body – reason - soul).*

4.2 Play–Dominant and Defining Form of Preschool Activity

For kindergarten teaching, playing is a fundamental activity. Play and playing place are in the forefront the child's natural pleasure of doing something and not relating the action to a pre-set goal. Playing is an expression of child's spontaneous activity, an activity full of pleasure and satisfaction. All psychologists agree upon the fact that playing is the dominant infantile activity, which is practiced for the child's development and his fulfilment as adult. It is the exclusive form of behaviour and the most proper manner of learning until the child goes to school.

By playing, the child assimilates knowledge and adapts to the environment. Therefore, playing has always an immediate functional value. Healthy children play all the time; they play collective games, when their interest is awakened. Thus, they develop their socializing skills. Due to the children's unstable interest for an activity, they change easily their interests, preferences and game direction. As the child grows up and after more practice, these features become more stable. The evolution of motivation for playing can be noticed, too. The

balance between play and development can be identified in the propelling character from the process of child personality development. We want to reveal a few characteristics of playing at preschool age, as a proof of the statement that it is a dominant activity at preschool age:

- The pleasant character and the association with positive feelings,

- The rewarding character resulted from the fact that playing is a pleasant activity and does not involve reaching goals outside play situations,

- The spontaneous and voluntary character. Play is an action not caused or controlled by someone else,

- The active character requires the participants' active involvement,

- The easy character of actions is not the same as in real life and doesn't have to be taken literally.

Playing has a formal character; it involves the development of all child's personality dimensions by activation of mental processes resulted from exploration of surrounding reality. The child acquires skills, abilities and habits by playing and also activates his creative potential. The play has certain goals in the development of a child's personality[30]:

- Progressive and spontaneous knowledge of the surrounding world,

- Proper understanding and control of issues and fears,

- Knowledge of their own person and relation to the world,

- Exploring the relationship between reality and phantasy,

- Development of intuitive and semiotic thinking.

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[30]Howard Gardner, (2004), *Mintea disciplinată*, Editura Sigma, Bucureşti.

We can notice that during a child's ontogenetic development, the games are varied and more and more complicated and suffer progressive changes as the child grows up. Socially, there is a gradual evolution in the child's playing style, especially in the first years of life:

- Solitary play with objects prevails until the age of 18 months,

- Parallel play, involves observing and imitating other children without real interaction until the age of three,

- Social play, appears around the age of four when playing is more and more present in simple interactions with other children. Initially, these interactions are pretty rigid, turning into cooperation later on.

4.3 Classification of Games

4.3.1 A Possible Taxonomy of Games

Different authors have identified and classified many types of games, according to their goals. One possible way of dividing games is the following:

1. Relaxation games. As their name points out, they are games which have the aim of creating a pleasant and comforting atmosphere, without inhibitions, which stimulates the ability of accepting the others. During these games, the players get to know each other, develop relationships and friendships. The topics of these games involve: knowing the room, knowing the other participants. They are useful games for memorizing the participants' names; concentration games; games which involve a lot of movement, games without discrimination (no winner and no loser – "new games").

2. Expression games. The aim of these games is human interaction based on verbal language, games based on sounds, various tones and rhythms.

3. Interaction games. These are cooperation and coordination games (partner games, group games); movement games with or without music; relaxation games; sensitivity games (confidence building games – in partner, in group); force games (power measurement, skill measurement), games with different materials (balloons, balls, chairs), games based on sounds, speaking, various tones and rhythms. Interaction games cover the need to establish relationships with the others, children or adults. Just like adults, who meet, communicate and interact out of the need of being socially active, children feel the need of human presence. Great importance is now given to speech and materials used.

4. Role plays. These games rebuild and reproduce real life situations; therefore they require longer and better preparation. Some of them are based on pantomime, improvisation, drama and even socio-drama and psychodrama.

According to Garvey, C., (1977) games can be categorized as follows:

- movement games,

- group games,

- speaking games,

- role plays,

- skill games,

- sport plays.

In his work *Games and a taxonomy of types of* games, Bob Hughes[31] makes the following classification:

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[31]www.playwork.org.

- symbolic games,

- aggressive games,

- socio-dramas,

- social games,

- creative games,

- communication games,

- drama,

- intellectual games,

- explorative games,

- fantastic games,

- imaginative games,

- movement games,

- authority games,

- objective games.

Gilsdorf şi Kistner (1999)[32] talk about:

- games for making friendship connections (games for learning the other member's names),

- movement games ("warming-up"),

- perception games,

- trust games,

- cooperation games,

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[32] www.relijoc.ro/html.

- adventure games.

A clear distinction cannot be made between these types of games. Elements of a category can be extracted from the context and be used in another category, but with different results.

5. Symbolic games: basic and evolved.

Basic symbolic games:

- Handling games:

    a) Games with small materials,

    b) Games with materials from the nature,

    c) Games with residual materials.

- Imitation games: configure social actions: Feeding the doll, making injections, Reading magazines.

Evolved symbolic games:

- Games with everyday life subjects:

    a) Games of social cohabitation relate to knowledge, skills and motivation: *Playing mother and child, Playing school; Playing the doctor,*

    b) Building games relate to knowledge, motivation and building skills: we build, manufacture from: *Lego, Arco, Plasticom, Mosaic, Rotodisc* etc.

6. Games with topics from fairy tales and stories:

    a) Dramas are determined by the influence of stories on children: *Playing Mother Goat and Her Three Kids, Playing Little Red Riding Hood, Playing The Salt in Your Food.*

b) Dramas based on scripts written by specialist and prepared by kindergarten teachers: *Cinderella, Puss in Boots, The Big Radish etc*.

c) Games with rules:

(1)   didactic games,

(2)   entertainment games.

Didactic games:

- Movement games:

  - symbolic motion games which are played with or without toys and materials: running, crawling, climbing, bike riding, fitness machine games,

  - complex motion games are played during guided learning activities (physical education): varied exercises; walking exercises, running, development of motion skills: obstacles, climbing, crawling, throwing.

Sport and movement games. They can be divided into:

- Games with a strong sport and fun character which are played outdoors (bike riding, roller-skating, sledging),

- Games which develop known basic movements (walking, running, jumping, throwing, catching, crawling, climbing and balance),

- Movement games with rules and roles (in the classroom and outdoors),

- Games with devices and outdoor games,

- Games of road traffic,

- Basic and easy dances,

- Aerobics,

- Eurhythmy.

The emergence and intensive practice of creative games is the result of the overall mental development of children, especially the development of self-reflection ability. Children reflect on the impression they have on the surrounding world:

a) Games of affective expression: puppet theatre, board theatre, shadow theatre, imitation, crying, laughter.

b) Games for mental development:

Sensory games:

- Games for hearing excitation,
- Games for touching excitation,
- Games for taste excitation,
- Games for smell excitation,
- Games for sight excitation,
- Games for educating balance.

Intellectual games:

- Phonemic games,
- Games for enriching vocabulary,
- Games for knowing the environment,
- Mathematic games,
- Musical games,
- Text and singing games,

- Games of the development of thinking,

- Logical games,

- Attention games, etc.

Entertainment games have a special aim and that is creating a pleasant atmosphere and bringing good mood. Therefore, they have to be simple, easily understandable through effortless explanations. They are attractive in themselves. Such examples are: *The kitten and the sparrows, Where is the bunny hidden? The swallow without a nest, The Statues, The wolf at the sheep* etc.

We can draft the taxonomy of games, if the selection criterion is the syllabus of instructional-educative activities:

- Games for Selected activities, games and other activities carried out by children,

- Games for Joint activities,

- Games for Complementary activities.

Another classification can be made starting from activity categories:

- Games for speech development,

- Games for mathematic activities,

- Games for environmental knowledge,

- Games for education for the society,

- Games for practical and household activities,

- Games for musical education,

- Games for art education,

- Games for physical education.

Each author who has been concerned with psychopedagogy of play drafted his own taxonomy according to the issues of the topic he dealt with. The main idea is that play is the basic activity at preschool age, irrespective of the activities the child is involved in.

4.3.2 Didactic Games

Didactic games are the most comprising category of games with rules; they enforce didactic activity through play motivations, which are subordinated to the goal of teaching-learning-evaluation activities. They differ from other games by the presence of didactic tasks.

Didactic games are:

- a didactic means of instruction and education of preschool children,
- basic didactic means in speech education and environmental knowledge,
- a means of linking the didactic task to playing.

Didactic games are extremely important in the teaching process because:

- they solve many issues of intellectual education by their content,
- they have an important role in the consolidation, systematization and assessment of knowledge.

The manner of organizing and using didactic games in kindergarten activities allows us to make the following distinction:

- based on pedagogic criteria,

- based on their objectives: sensory games (hearing, visual, motion and tactile), observation games, speech development games, games of interactive,

- based on teaching contents: mathematic games, musical games, sports games, literary/linguistic,

- based on the form of expression: symbolic games, orientation games, sensitizing games, conceptual games, riddles, crosswords,

- based on the resources used: material games, oral games, question based games, worksheet based games, computer games,

- based on rules: games with traditional rules, games with invented rules, games with spontaneous rules, protocol based rules,

- based on the stimulated psychological competences: movement games, imagination games, attention games, memory games, thinking games, speaking games, creative games.

The children's games turn into a method of teaching if they have a specific organization and are used I the order required by the logics of knowledge and learning. Children can discover truth, train their creative abilities because the strategies of didactic games are heuristic strategies, which involve spontaneity, inventiveness, initiative, patience, daring, creativity and intelligence.

The main intention of didactic games is not entertainment but the acquisition of knowledge with the aim of preparing the child for school and life. Therefore, didactic games should be instructive; they should enhance, methodize and retention of knowledge. The usage of didactic games in whole group activities brings attractive elements in the teaching-educating process. Each didactic game has a certain structure:

- contents,

- didactic task,

- rules,

- action.

The contents include the children's previous knowledge acquired during joint activities with the whole group. Knowledge refers to human beings, plants, animals, seasons, mathematic representations, society, etc.

Didactic task is actually a matter of thinking, recognition, designation, reconstruction, comparison, guessing. Didactic games may have the same contents but a different character, due to the tasks they have to solve. These tasks are always different.

The rules of didactic games have the aim of showing children how to play, how to solve the task, participate in an activity. Moreover, they have a regulatory function on the relationships between children.

The action includes the moments and stages of the game and makes the task solving a pleasant and attractive activity for children. It is actually the game in itself with its stages: waiting, surprise, guessing, competition, appreciation.

Didactic games are used in all curriculum stages according to their objectives. After the type of activity, didactic games are used as consolidation, practice, retention and recovery of knowledge. Irrespective of the manner it is used, the didactic game helps children engage their full mental potential, develop their initiative and inventiveness, flexibility of thinking, cooperation and teamwork spirit.

The didactic game contains the following stages:

- lead-in,

- enforcement,

- complications,

- end of games.

Didactic games run under a specific methodology, which takes into consideration the following conditions:

- the game should be designed according to the category of activity, considering its goals and task,

- it should be carefully and thoroughly prepared by the teacher based on time management and materials used,

- it should be varied, attractive and combine play with learning elements,

- the teacher should use play and surprises when children show signs of boredom and tiredness,

- games should create moments of recreation in order to recover the children's nervous energy,

- it should engage all children in the game,

- it should be age appropriate,

- it should be structured according to the type and goal of the activity,

- it should require creative thinking and use the children's intellectual possibilities at their full potential,

- the play elements should be introduced in any moment,

- the didactic tasks should be divided into progressive sequences in terms of difficulty,

- the explanations should be clear, accurate, and precise. The children should be aware of them and they should give them motivation for playing,

- games should be used in an active, stimulating and dynamic environment,

- didactic tasks should not be too easy but not too difficult,

- the rules should be clearly explained and the teacher should make sure that the children follow them.

Play elements such as: guessing, movement, racing, surprise, etc., involve emotional moods which maintain the interest for such activities.

The usage of didactic games in the teaching-educational process in kindergarten is motivated by:

- the efficiency is higher, the practice, retention and evaluation of knowledge being more pleasant, active and thorough,

- the children's thinking is constantly demanded and therefore in continuous development,

- determines the development of mental processes such as: independence, creativity and perseverance,

- stimulates the child's initiative; the child is more courageous, relaxed and less inhibited while playing,

- it contributes to a faster and more efficient knowledge of children,

- it develops the observation, analysis, judgement skills, removes monotony, routine, stereotypes and give children the opportunity to expend their vocabulary and thus communication becomes more permissive,

- it gives the teacher the opportunity to find out how children think and adapt their teaching methods to the children's thinking.

The literature in the field offers plentiful didactic games which can be used successfully during various activities. The teacher's skills will lead to outstanding results in play based activities. If the teacher wants to be successful

in her activity, she has to develop the following virtues in the participants to the game: communication, cooperation, responsibility, flexibility, spontaneity, creativity and trust. The play is a tool, a manner of constant engagement of children in an activity. Didactic games have to be prepared in advance according to its stages: *organization, lead-in, enforcement and exploitation of results*. In planning the activity, the teacher has to be familiar with the situation of her group, their training level, interests, etc. The planning of didactic games is based on bibliographic resources (books, game collection, cards) and the memorizing of many game elements, which can be used in any stage of the game. *Explanation* is one important step in the organization of a successful didactic game. The teacher has to explain the game and at the same time, she has to put it into practice. The teacher will explain the game using proper, uncomplicated vocabulary and will influence positively the climate. Then, the leader has to repeat plainly and clearly the game with its rules. The teacher guides her children towards easy and funny actions through her words and behaviour. She prepares illustrative materials or other type of material in advance and she will use them during the game. In certain cases, playing as joy and catharsis generator, becomes therapy for the child's mental balance, trauma healing and discharge of affective-behavioural regressions.

4.3.3 Entertainment Games with Rules

The games with rules are games which are integrated in preschool period and experience a complex development in early school years. As their name points out, these games are played according to pre-set rules. The rules are set at the beginning of the game and they have to be followed accordingly. Who doesn't follow them, will be rejected from the game. The rules and the organization are decided at the beginning of the game, after serious debate.

1. Two types of rules are used in this type of game:

a) spontaneous;

b) transmitted from one generation to the other.

There are significant differences between the behaviour of young, medium and older pre-schoolers both in subject games and games with rules.

A young pre-schooler cannot remember all rules in a game such as *Hide and seek.* He will only remember one or two rules, such as the one related to hiding. For him, hiding means sitting somewhere, where his head cannot be seen; thus he hides with the face against the wall or the hiding place is somewhere nearby. After a while, he runs towards the place the game started, without considering the stage of the game. When the game starts over, he will hide in the same place and in the same way. Young pre-schoolers remember just partly the rules of a complex game and their behaviour highlights the fact that they cannot fit in the overall temporary unfolding of events, their action is independent and contains repetitive, circular reactions.

The medium pre-schooler is more evolved in behaviour than the young one. He hides in further places, searches longer for a hiding place, makes a lot of noise while playing, gets mad with the younger ones who baffle the game. The medium pre-schooler doesn't organize well all stages of the game, although he knows the rules and obeys them. His participation is passionate, affectionate and complete. Although his social integration in the game is difficult, the child chooses complicated hiding places, which lead to conflicts because he has difficulties in coming out of his hiding.

The older pre-schooler fully understands the rules, he hides in accessible places, close to the playground; re restructures mentally the actions, organizes pretty well the final stage of the game. He feels that the surprise factor is important in the game, but it doesn't always come out the way he wants it; he

interference in the game is sometimes tense, because he relies too much on the surprise factor. His ontogenetic development favours behaviour adjusted to the rules of the game, a better strategic organization of its stages.

Games and especially games with rules reach a superior development level at preschool age, when the game becomes a sine qua non condition for the child's future development. The psychopedagogists who have studied play state: *Playing is the child's main activity because its development stimulates and contributes to the most important mental changes which prepare the child's transition to a superior development stage.*[33]

Preschool age is a time of unprecedented mental evolution, when playing is assigned new and important features, which bring it closer to social activities. Playing is enriched, builds varied activities to other activities from their super-ordination or subordination on criteria set by the rules, to their differentiation from reality through phantasy. The relationship between known and unknown, possible and impossible, real and unreal is developed on playing, seen as timeless and fantastic space, which helps the child learn about the world and life. These notions become more comprehensible by means of play.

Play at preschool age experiences an evolutional stage parallel to child development. The most complex, varied and interesting games appear at this stage.[34]

The children's games are extremely mobile and are converted one into the other. In terms of contents, the games with rules can be:

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[33] A.N. Leontiev, *Probleme de psihologia copilului de vârstă preşcolară*, Editura de stat, Pedagogie şi Psihologie 1948.

[34] S.Rogers, (Ed.). *Rethinking play and pedagogy in early childhood education: concepts, contexts and cultures.* Albingdon, England; New York: Routledge, 2011, p.45.

- Reproduction games of little events (ironing, getting dressed),

- Games with easy topics (walking with the doll, playing the garage),

- Games with complex topics (family, at the doctor's, in the kindergarten, at school).

An aspect worth noticing is that games with topics can be found at children 5-6 years of age, even when they don't have a play partner; the child involved in playing performs more successive (alternating) roles.

The games with rules involve obeying the rules of the game in a certain order, which determines changes in the children's attitude. They become more organized in their behaviour, restrain their impulses and become more disciplined. The rules cannot be broken; therefore games have a complex character and develop fair-play based emulation among children.

4.3.4 Creative Games

The studies of psychologists reveal an important characteristic of play which relies on the pre-schoolers' creativity and imagination (Amabile, Teresa, M., 1997), (Sawyer, R., K., 2001). Endless creativity and fantasy are mirrored in the children's creative games. Creative games help children change reality into experience and understand it. Aspects of reality encountered in the environment are integrated in creative games and interpreted in a manner that fits to the children's interests and desires. Creativity games help the child in his development and flawless evolution.

Decades of studies highlight the importance of creativity games in childhood. They are part of children's lives; playing and learning are inseparable at this stage and it is difficult the set the barrier between playing and learning. Childhood doesn't make a distinction between playing and learning. When

children play, they acquire knowledge, develop their abilities, train their physical and mental skills, and improve their social abilities.

Children assimilate reality according to their level of understanding and aspirations, in a playful, relaxed manner. The education of preschool children is made through play; if parents want to have healthy children with no problems of social adjustment, they just have to give them examples from all categories of games and create a proper playing environment. Creative plays a the children's was of acceding to knowledge. The adults and the teachers will supervise closely the play in order to interfere when things go badly. The play is the main kindergarten activity with educational-formative influence.

Creative games develop the children's innate abilities and skills.

It is very important to let children manifest their abilities without refraining them, but on the contrary, encourage their creative activities, especially creative games.

The specialists have noticed that repetitive actions are part of the ritual and they play an important role in the development of skills, abilities and potential of preschool children. In time, these repetitions lead from interest in certain activities to distinctive creative activities. A child, who constantly repeats a song, trains the vocal cords and develops certain musical abilities. Many times, angry parents hinder these manifestations. It is an extremely harmful situation for the child's state of mind. Instead of being angry, they should encourage the child, support him and help him develop his potential talent.

All psychologists who have studies child's play agree that a child wants to resemble an adult. Creative games prove the child's wish of growing up, of being like his parents or other adults. We can identify this aspect by analysing the children's creative games, which reflect their tendency of imitating adults,

of being like them. Games are the internal engine which drives the psycho-physical formative abilities of child development. Creative games enrich the children's life experience, develop their abilities and attitudes. If encouraged, children will improve their creative potential and motivation for performing these activities.

Creative games contribute to the development of voluntary attention. Although the children's attention is unstable due to their age, they are completely involved and focused while playing. It is common knowledge that children cannot stay focused for a longer period of time, if they like the game they play, things can evolve positively. Children are totally detached when playing. They are fully absorbed by their activity. Formal education and standardized teaching methods should keep the children's creativity vivid and encourage any creative attempt. Education, irrespective of its form, should maintain the children's innate affinity for creativity and follow the path of creative learning based on play.

Adults should give children positive examples as children imitate them in their games.

If until 2-3 years of age the child is oriented towards himself, his own body, surrounding objects, the spoon he eats with, the cuddly toys, etc. the plays become more creative during his ontogenetic development. Children imitate what they see around them, in their lives and games will contain actions taken over from reality (feeding dolls, preparing meals, walking the cuddly dogs, driving a car on an imaginary road etc.). There are certain elements of creative games which emerge in any child's early childhood. These elements are enriched and as the child grows up the topics of creative games are richer in content.

The child's social relations develop as soon as he starts kindergarten and

games are a reflection of changes in his life; kindergarten offers children the opportunity to express their creativity. When they are engaged in activities suitable for their personality, their age characteristics and interests, the impact on their development is very strong. They are motivated and like to be involved in activities. Thus, creative games give children real support for their training and personality development. Creation games such as socio-dramas or role play offer endless opportunities to develop cognitive and affective-emotional processes. (Sara Smilansky, 1990). After practicing such creative games, one can notice improvement in the following areas:

a) cognitive-creative:

- better verbal expression,
- richer vocabulary,
- faster understanding,
- more elaborate expression,
- optimized resolutive strategies,
- greater curiosity,
- better participation,
- improved intellectual abilities.

b) affective-emotional:

- more active participation in pair games,
- active participation in the social group,
- better collaboration,
- reduced aggressive behaviour,
- emergence of empathic feelings,

- better self-control,

- refraining spontaneous impulses,

- innovation spirit,

- loosened imagination,

- better concentration,

- perseverance in task solving.

Creativity games, but mostly socio-dramas and role plays stimulate the intellectual, affective and emotional abilities channelling the children's energy towards the development of those abilities and skills which will be useful in school activities. The situations and relationships staged by socio-dramas show similarities to real-life situations, which children are about to experience in their school activity. Thus, children acquire knowledge and skills, develop their thinking, work with abstract and general notions, etc. Obviously, imagination plays a great part in these processes. Anything can be creative with the help of imagination and narrative art. Specialists have noticed that children who are actively involved in creative games in kindergarten show the same enthusiastic behaviour in doing school activities. This aspect was proven in the 70s in Germany, where an experiment was conducted on 100 pre-schoolers. 50 children attended a kindergarten that uses mostly academic activities in the teaching process and the other 50 attended a kindergarten which plans the activities on games. The comparison between the two groups revealed conclusive results. Children who attended the game oriented kindergarten had better results in terms of knowledge acquisition, psycho-motor, affective-emotional, social and intellectual development than kids taught with academic activities. The experiment was followed by reforms in the German preschool system. Kindergartens were focused on playing and play became the main activity in preschool training and education.

It has been noticed that adult involvement in children's games can be tactless and harmful for their creativity. Adult, teacher or parent interference should be carefully organized so that it won't refrain the children's freedom and creativity. Adults and teachers should only be regarded as outsiders of the game. They should interfere only for conflict solving and maintain discipline or suggest solutions based on their diplomacy ant teaching skills. Children will be guided using the teacher's skills and teaching abilities and each and one of them can revalue the ideas and initiatives in a creative manner. If the child fulfils his intentions and aspiration in playing, he will be able to succeed in real life. Furthermore, a child's initiative will also involve other children in the creative game; it will develop relationships among children and they will become more sociable and civilized. Creative games enrich the children's horizons; their experience become richer and more goal oriented.

Suppression of initiative and creativity would curb the child's development, and children with potential can become children with difficulties. Such situations can emerge due to financial impediments or lack of proper teaching skills.

4.3.5 Role Play

Many times we ask children what they want to be when they grow up. They give plenty of answers such as: pilot, magician, ballerina, astronaut, actor, doctor, fighter, soldier. Their imagination is extremely wide, especially if activated and encouraged. If adults give children clothes to dress themselves up, their games become more dynamic and rich in content. Children chose clothes based on the role they are about to play and their imagination goes wild when they play together. The most ordinary objects are changed into useful tools for the game. A chair will turn into a sophisticated car, a stick into a magic wand, a bedding placed on a chair will turn it into an invincible fortress. Children have

an extraordinary ability of scriptwriting, plotting and staging like in a real theatre play. Role plays bring a tremendous contribution to the development of children's creativity and imagination. Adults in charge with child education, kindergarten teachers especially, should be familiar with the children's natural desire to play by imitating real life situations or fairy tales in their role plays. If children have clothes and pieces of clothing at hand, they get engaged in various roles. The more diversified the role plays are, the richer will the children's life experience be. Research prove that children who take part in role plays with various topics and use their imagination and creativity will become better pupils and solve faster any problems they face.

Children follow carefully the adults' activities, especially their parents'. A girl will follow her mother closely when she prepares herself to go out. When the girl goes back to her room, she will imitate every detail of her mother's preparation: from getting dressed to make-up.

In role plays, children learn competition, fighting to reach an objective even if they aren't aware of these things. All is going to be stored and kept in their memory and used when the time comes.

Adults in charge with preschool education must encourage the play. Researches prove that play is very important in the children's development on the following levels: cognitive, affective-emotional, desire. Children feel safer and braver in front of an audience, their self-esteem is higher and they have more confidence I their own strengths. Role plays engage even shyer children, who sometimes take up even leading roles.

Role plays are exactly the type of games preferred by children. They prepare children for their future social life (Elkind, D., 2007). Researcher says that role plays are the heart of childhood, a heart which beats in the child's biological rhythm and has no limits in fulfilling the imaginary wishes of a preschool child.

Teachers are familiar with these childhood specific traits and are also aware of the formative character of role plays. The rooms should be equipped with a corner with costumes for both genders and certain accessories such as: jewellery, batches, bags, purses, etc. that would stimulate the children's interest and imagination. Teachers will encourage children to practice role play, advise them and also play along with them.

Besides all the aspects about the importance of play in the development of a child's personality that we have already discussed, we also want to highlight its importance in the development of speaking skills. Role play has a powerful impact on speaking because it activates the area of proximate development (Vîgotski, 2002). Children have to communicate during role plays, they have to verbalize the rules in a correct and proper language; all have to talk to each other in a language suitable for the role they play. If the child plays the role of a policeman, he has to use specific vocabulary; if the child is a doctor the child will use medical terms; for the role of *Cinderella,* the child has to use the dialogue written by the author of the fairy tale. We can state that children use a metalanguage adapted to the situation and the role interpreted by the child, so that everybody else can understand him. Speaking is practiced, internalized and improved during role play activities.

Role play helps children adapt affectively and emotionally to different contradicting situations they have to face and for whom they are not yet prepared (Beaven, J. 2000). Contradictions, conflicts and the turn of events find positive solutions through role plays on an imaginary level. Reality with so many contradictions, rules and inaccuracies adapts to the child's cognitive and affectionate-emotional only through play. Role plays enable faster and easier understanding of surrounding reality.

4.4 The Children's Play Nowadays

4.4.1 The Ontogenetic Evolution of Plays

Play is a major activity in the child's development; between play and development there is a relation of interdependence and necessity. A healthy child plays and if one doesn't, it is a clear sign that he needs affection. Any healthy child plays and develops a relationship with his toys, which cannot be replaced with anything else; the relationship with his favourite toy is a special one. The child plays instinctively and intuitively but needs support to direct the game, enrich it and acquire knowledge. From a diachronic perspective, play has experienced many changes but also times of stability. All babies play alike, they move their hands and feet; all these clumsy and unguided actions bring satisfaction to a baby. It repeats them, feels that it can move, grab, drag, gurgle and syllabify. As babies grow up, they start seeing better, become more active, want to grab objects, bring them closer and analyse them, discover new thing and explore. If in the beginning all information go through senses: the child sees, hears, touches, tastes, smells and feels, later on he starts to recognize familiar objects, starts to distinguish between objects he likes or dislikes. At this age, he discovers that any action of his on an object has effects (if one pulls the chain from the carriage, the toys star moving). At this stage, knowledge and learning go hand in hand. The child grows up and reaches the age of biped walking, firstly helped by the parents and surrounding objects, which are used as support for his walking in the attempt to conquer the surroundings, and later his universe widens and appropriate for the child's desire to know. The child's play is assigned with other values and aspects; the child is aware of what is going on around him, enjoys the games played with the mother, and is full of energy and curiosity. Gradually, plays are richer and more varied; the child has playmates, learns how to play with other children and starts sharing the toys. If we follow the child's psycho-social evolution, we can have an idea about the ontogenetic

evolution of play:

- The toddles' play – is a manner of baby-parent relationship. The baby smiles, looks, moves in response to the parents attention or to catch their attention,

- Solitary play – begins at the age of 1 and is the toddler's way of playing alone with his toys or the adults around him,

- Parallel play – from the age of 1 year and 6 months until the age of 2. Children play alone even when they are together with other children and aware of their presence,

- Associative play – between 2 and 3 years of age; children meet other children but they neither work together nor cooperate because egocentrism is still strong,

- Cooperative play – is the preschool period; children play together, have joint activities, share their toys, the play is more and more complex and well organized and it has rules.

We can notice an evolution of play along with the child's growing up, from instinctive, precise and intuitive play to elaborated, complex plays – plays with rules.

The child plays by instinct; no one tells him to play because playing is part of any child's genetic code. No one trains him or teaches him how to play because it is an innate ability; playing is part of a child's life since birth. Parents will interfere and guide the child in the attempt to know and understanding the world in the course of time. The new-born sees, but doesn't understand what it sees; hears but doesn't yet understand the meaning of what he hears; smiles but doesn't know why, makes sounds but doesn't speak. A baby is vulnerable, defenceless; it needs care and comfort, love and play to grow up beautifully and

healthy. Children explore a lot in order to understand the world around them. Handling and working with objects are extremely important in playing. Children explore by trying and failing, making errors. The most common example is that of a child disassembling all toys not because he wants to destroy them but because he wants to know them. At this level knowledge is acquired through senses: the child sees, hears, and faces reality in a direct manner. Sometimes adults don't understand the children's attitudes, but it is certain that children need to be understood and they need to understand the world they live in. You cannot ask the child to play in a certain way; his development is the result of personal explorations. They feel the need to find their own solutions which are actually a sign of their future learning style.

The play engages all area of personality development and therefore E. Erikson (1963) believes that playing is the child's manner of bringing feelings and interior ideas to light.

4.4.2 The Evolution of Play

Play has experienced many changes from a diachronic perspective. Today, children play games which until recently weren't played in childhood years. Children who live in the city spend a lot of time indoors, at home or in institutions, due to the conditions of city life. Children spend most of their time playing computer games, TV games or games on other electronic devices. The outdoor playgrounds are also equipped with games and other materials used for outdoor playing. These games don't have the ability of stimulating the child's development on all levels, therefore children should attend kindergartens where they have the opportunity to develop all their potential. Any child ability can be trained through games (Isenberg & Quisenberry, 2002). All personality sides can be developed through games and the innate abilities can suffer evolutional changes. The connection between play and the development of linguistic,

mathematic and aesthetic abilities has been revealed in studies conducted by specialists. (Răduţ-Taciu, R., (coord.), (2004), Van Hoorn, Nourot, Scales şi Alward, 2007).[35]

When children play,

- They have numerous opportunities to practice mental representations in various situations,

- They train all personality sides: physical, social, emotional, intellectual,

- They are fully engaged because they are motivated,

- They develop their thinking and abilities. For instance, a 4 year old girl learnt writing her own name with a plastic scrabble and she understood that each sound is represented by a letter. She found her motivation in the meaning of the word: her name,

- They acquire concepts logically; each concept has to be understood. Mechanic learning is useless because the concepts are not kept in one's mind, they are forgotten.

Playing is for children an extremely important and serious activity. They rebuild reality in accordance with their wishes, bring is closer, analyse and try to understand it. The child makes effort while playing like grown up do in their everyday life; therefore play is considered a childhood job. Children cannot process reality through abstract means because of their age related features. Instead they use concrete multisensory experience. Children solve issues related to the physical or social environment through play; they create situations to find different solutions – it develops their thinking, which along with ontogenetic development reaches also the formal one. Play allows children to learn the

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[35]Play at the Center of the Curriculum in www.4children.org/pdf/play07.pdf.

usefulness of objects; they focus on what they do, become interested in the environment, which they carefully explore with motivation and interest.

4.4.3 Play and Computers

The evolution of science brought about tremendous evolution of electronics and its applications of the personal computer are inexhaustible. Computers are part of every child's life; each child has a computer at home or in the kindergarten. Computer games are varied and some have even high educational value. Children enrich their knowledge and acquire new skills and abilities by using computer games. Statistics show that children who use computers in their early childhood are more intelligent than others. Didactic computer games are extremely useful in acquiring new knowledge about the world, even for learning writing and reading. Entertainment computer games are also very pleasant for children. Besides these positive aspects, we have to stress out certain aspects that each parent should take into consideration:

- time spent by children in front of the computer should be reasonable,

- the computer game is static; therefore parents should encourage children in doing outdoor activities, in the yard, in the park, etc,

- computer games are solitary and children need social interaction if they want to fit in the society and grow up healthy,

- many times the moral content of video games is mostly questionable,

- online connection is useful but at the same time dangerous. The virtual world is as full of dangers as the real one; therefore parents should restrict or even ban the children's access to internet when they are not supervised.

Many children who are passionate about computers spend much time in front of the screen and turn into unsociable, overweight or even neurotic teenagers.

Statistics signal these situations and every pedagogue should take them into account and mention them.

Computers are useful and beneficial teaching tools as long as they are used with moderation and combined with traditional teaching methods. The mixture of traditional methods with computer games or other electronic games will result in the child's complete development, provided that inter-human relationships and movement are not neglected.

4.4.4 Games that Activate the Brain

Besides other benefits that play brings into a child's life, it has also a therapeutic role. Counsellors and psychologists know the formative values of play as manner of changing undesirable symptoms and behaviours of children suffering from various mental disorders. Thus, play is a therapeutic way of educating children with *Global development disorders* (known as the autistic or Asperger syndrome). Children suffering from these disorders show signs of poor social interaction. The child can be taught how to react in various social situations using adapted games. The play of games with imaginary characters teaches the child to use forms of politeness, appropriate responses for repetitive situations from his social life. The child will acquire certain social skills; he can also learn social behaviours that he can use in everyday life (for instance the difference between private and public).

Plays are very supportive for teachers, when they have a hyperactive child in the group. Games with rules are very useful for teaching discipline; the hyperactive child will be forced to obey the rules to avoid the others' rejection. The child will refrain his aggressive tendencies and the teacher will reward

positive attitudes of hyperactive children.

The Japanese neuro-specialist Kawashima [36] included in his medical researches two revolutionary concepts in healing people suffering from chronic diseases, whose sickness affected severely the quality of their life. The two studies are entitled *Train your Brain* and *Brain Age* and contain ways of making the brain use its functions. The two papers were very successful in Japan, which tempted a famous company in producing computer games. Therefore they proposed Kawashima to adapt his books to computer games, which used the researcher's theories. That is how the game *Brain Training* appeared. It stimulates intellectual capacity and mental sharpness. People obtain mental reactivation due to the mental exercises contained by this game and thus improve their life quality.

The play doesn't stimulate just one part of the brain but more regions which are used in everyday life and improve the brain's functions and also the ability of social readjustment. Play therapy is based on the principles of the child's ontological development and ensures proper ways of expression and communication.

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[36]www.braintraining.com.

Seminar Activities

Tasks and Applications

1. ▬

Starting from the following statement: *"Only what man acquired early in life is strong and persistent in himself"* (J. A. Comenius, Great Didactic), write a structured essay of 150 words.

Working time 10 minutes.

2. ▬

How can play stimulate the training and development potential of a complex personality?

3. ▬

4. ▬

5. ▬

6. ▬

Chapter 5

Play in Curricular Contents

5.1 Forms of Play in Kindergarten and School

In modern psychology, play is assimilated by the training and development process of human personality. Childhood games are included in the psychogenetic evolution. The psychologist Jean Piaget calls preschool period, the stage of intuitive thinking, which lasts between 4 and 7/8 years of age. It is the period when the relationships between phenomena are developed and the young schooling period is the stage of concrete operations (7-11/12 years of age), when the abilities of preserving the substance are developed. After the age of 12, children experience the period of formal operations, when judgements are chained based on relevant arguments.[37] Piaget's research proves that mental structures and psychical phenomena have a special and different organization in the child's psychic compared to the adult's. Normal evolution and intellectual development begin in the preschool period through the children's primary activity: the play. This habit overlaps perfectly the theory of psychogenesis which is developed on the general biological notion of adaptability. It considers intelligence the product of sociocultural environment in which the child evolves and that it reflects the maturity stage of the central nervous system. The role of social, cultural and economic environment in the child's evolution is stressed out. Genetic studies based on intelligence tests have proven (according to some authors) that 65 % of one's intellectual level is the result of hereditary factors and the rest is linked to the environment in which the person evolves. Therefore, we consider kindergarten an important factor in the evolution of preschool children. Play, as concrete, direct and noticeable activity in kindergarten is for educators and specialists a valuable, formative and evaluative asset, which can

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[37] U., Goswami, & P. E. Bryant, *Children's cognitive development and learning. The Primary Review*, University of Cambridge / Esmee Fairbairn, 2007, p.43.

be used in shaping the child's personality. Play is in kindergartens a guided and controlled activity which takes into account the biological and psychological development of children. In the sensorimotor period, games are easy exercises called by Jean Chateau and Charlotte Bühler *"functional games"*, which help in the development of motor abilities by movement of body parts and catching an throwing objects; development of speaking abilities by gurgling and vocalizing. The activities, though easy and without significance at first sight, allow each function to explore and develop one field which later on will be expended. Therefore, at the age of one, the toddler spends two thirds of his time moving and gurgling. These aspects are forms of spontaneous play. We have to mention that the object of play is not important at this age, but the *"practice of the function"*. Spectacular acquisitions at biological, physiological and psychological level occur know. Once this stage of functional play is overrun, the child will search for novelty, which is sometimes produced even by himself. Then he integrates the new element in his life through mechanisms of assimilation/adjustment, thus showing the first signs of experience. One of the essential principles for the activity of normal human mind is the principle of obtaining pleasure, which guide most of the human actions. If in the beginning the child likes the result of sensory action, later on he will like doing the action. According to Maslow's [38] pyramid of human needs (physiological, safety, belonging and love), the child completes the first level and moves on to the second one. It is the level of superior needs (self-actualization, esteem, self-achievement). Now it's the moment when the awareness of action is foreshadowed and actions become a voluntary act. The child trains his superior abilities now, such as motivation, desire and achievement, which make the child feel proud, although results are not always as expected. In the symbolic thinking

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[38]Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) was an American humanist psychologist. He is known for his proposal on the theory of the hierarchy of human needs.

period, the child develops his speaking skills, movement and action autonomy, due to the development of specific analysers. The much better developed neuro-motor system allows him to perform more complex and accurate actions. The development of mental processes is favourable for the child's psychological development. The child is now aware of who he is, recognises his image in the mirror, his name and the people from his environment. The child's play acquires new values, the play time is longer, and the games are differently structured and performed. Games are more complex and the child uses objects which are part of the action. The child acquires from now on multiple experiences which are represented in his games. The imaginary level is more evolved, the fantasy is free, and the child imagines situations and characters which he uses in his games. Play becomes a way of assimilating reality and knowledge, but also a manner of enhancing the child's latent qualities. The imitation of adults' actions becomes a projection of the child's personality in development. The child drives cars, trains, sail, flies planes, spaceships; he is Batman or Princess Xena. The games involve symbolism, which is frequently and multivalent used at this age, because infantile games are fantasy and hyperbole. Children rebuild reality and shape it according to their wishes. When playing, the chair turns into a rail engine, a pair of glasses turns him into Zorro, and a cape has magical powers.

In the period of intuitive thinking, games are more diversified, given that the child starts making connections between phenomena. The child wants to assert his own value. According to Charles Bühler: *The child believes that everything that has been done by him is more beautiful than something that has been done by someone else.*

The enrolment of children in the formal educational system, i.e. the preschool education represented by kindergartens, will gradually introduce the child into the learning process, which is stimulating, diversified, oriented towards his primary need and interests: play and movement. Kindergarten uses play to teach

children the values of their society through specific activities and methods appropriate for their age. Activities are organized by skilled, dedicated and well trained teachers. Teachers know that children express themselves through play at this age and all educational strategies, techniques and methods are based on play. The child is confronted with issues related to socializing in the beginning, because kindergarten is a formal environment structurally different from family environment. Children come with certain behaviours, attitudes, ways if interaction which are shaped and improved by the organized educational environment. The educational process is controlled and carefully guided by teaching staff and other specialists (counsellors, psycho-pedagogues) who try to shape desirable behaviours. This endeavour should be natural, stress-free and it shouldn't put pressure on the children. Play by its nature will provide specialists from kindergartens with strategies used for the achievement of their educational goals according to the preschool syllabus. The main task of kindergartens is the development of social relationships. Though young pre-schoolers don't feel the urge of playing with other children, gradually as they develop psycho-physically, their need of belonging and affiliation (the third level of Marlow's Pyramid) increases and becomes obvious around the age of five. From this age, children feel good only together with other children. Their plays are more and more elaborate, plays with subjects and role are better assimilated by children, the rules are followed and behaviour is adapted to the role. The topics of role play become more varied, children play together with a lot of dedication, but they can also play alone because role plays involve sometimes playing with imaginary characters and children are capable of handling more roles at once. Games with topics have inner strength and operational - -symbolist - instrumental structure. Most roles are taken over from real life, as seen by children in their social interactions. Games have rules, and along with other games such as didactic games, are very important due to their educational character. The child has access to behavioural models, types of interaction,

proper language. Games, by their structure, content and methods are tools used to train and develop attitudes or correct behaviours. Children are subjected to behavioural restraints, which shouldn't be imposed but developed through play. Children learn how to react properly, to assume their role in from of the group and behave as the role demands it. Kindergarten prepares the child for school. When the child goes to school, he begins the period of concrete operations. Therefore, he understands better the aspects of the surrounding world, and the level of thinking allows him to operate with abstract notions, such as conservation of substance. From now on, the child has all cognitive abilities which are necessary for the understanding of object properties: quantity and number. Mental development favours the observation of quantity and number conservation. The child understands that they remain unchanged when subjected to changes related to shape, position or other specific attributes. Mental operations have more mobility and flexibility, which allows the child to understand complex operations such as mathematic relations of volume and weight. Weight is conserved mentally only toward the age of 10 and volume and probability toward the age of 11-12. The children's play is tinted and diversified; young pupils like collections of all sorts. Psychologists have studied these issues for many years now. They believe that 100% of boys and 91% of girls 11-12 years of age collect something. After the age of 12, when the period of formal operations begins, thinking is focused on abstract reasoning and hypothesis which assume all possible aspects. The teenager operates now with classes and relations, thanks to the development of processes and functions. Thinking and intelligence start reasoning through operations which involve internalizing external actions with objects. The non-linear character of thinking should be signalled at this stage. Therefore, educational actions will always take into account the psychological development of pupils. Learning should fulfil the pupils' need for action, for handling real or imaginary objects, for projecting themselves in various roles and situations and of course the need for playing.

Play is the link between school, life and the child's personality. *The child is a being, whose main need is playing (...). The need for play is the one thing which allows us to conciliate school with life, to provide the pupil with those reasons for action which cannot be found in the classroom.*

Alternating school activities with didactic games gives a dynamics of performance to instructive-educational activities. The combination of teaching methods in such a manner that it would improve the educational process is one of the main directions of contemporary reform in education. The implementation of play in teaching-learning activities helps the assimilation, practice and consolidation process as well as retention and transfer of knowledge. The introduction of play elements in the stages of a serious and dry lesson, relaxes the atmosphere and gives children confidence. These play elements are beneficial for the development of children. It has been proven that play helps the mental development of preschool children and of pupils, who issue more and more balanced cognitive structures. Pedagogues admit that the usage of play in the teaching-learning process makes the teaching act more attractive and also meets the children's requirements.

Didactic games can be successfully organized in school education for all school subjects, at any stage of the lesson. The objectives are: acquisition of new knowledge and skills, practice and reinforcement, evaluation and assessment of pupils' level of training. Play elements stimulate the children's creativity, develop their freedom of thinking and action, forms the character and its traits, initiative, courage, willingness, perseverance, combat, correctness, discipline, cooperation and civilized behaviour.

The reform of education has moved the emphasis from intellectual factors on motivational and affective ones, and the play gives teachers the opportunity to use efficient methods for pupils' affective-emotional integration. An activity

should contain play elements such as surprise, guessing, racing, exploration and expectation if it wants to become an attractive, stimulating and motivating didactic activity.

5.2 The Integration of Play Elements in the Contents of Preschool Curriculum

The Romanian preschool education is organized according to educational policies for preschool level, namely the preschool education curriculum. In a broader sense, the curriculum designates the learning experiences that a child has to go through during his schooling period and in a narrow sense, the curriculum is represented by all school documents which regulate preschool activity: curriculum plan (see Tables no 1 and 2), syllabus, application guides, textbooks, etc.[39]

Table 1. Kindergartens with regular schedule.

Not.	Type of activity	Level I 3-5 years of age	Level II 5-7 years of age
I.	Joint activities	7	10
A.	Speaking development activities	1	2
A.	Mathematic activities.	1	2
B.	Environment knowledge	1	1
B.	Education for society		1
	Practical and household activities	1	1
A.	Musical education	1	I
B.	Visual art education	1	1
A.	Civic education	1	1
Il.	Selected activities, games and other activities with the children	17	14
III.	Extensions	0-1	1-2
IV.	Optional activities	0-1	1-2
	Minimum number of activities/week.	24	26
	Maximum number of activities/ week	25	28

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[39]Gabriela Kelemen, *Pedagogie preşcolară*, Editura UAV, 2007.

Tabel 2. Preschool Curriculum.

No	The place of activity in the daily schedule	Type of activity	Level I - 3-5 years of age Number of activities	Level II - 5-7 years of age Number of activities
I	Morning	Joint activities	7	10
A	"	Speaking development activities	1 1	2
A. B.	"	Mathematic activities. Environment knowledge	1 1	2 L
A. B.	"	Education for society Practical and household activities	1	1 1 l
B.	"	Musical education Visual art education	1 l	1 L
A.	"	Physical education	1	1
II.	"	Selected activities, games and other activities with children	17	14
III.	"	Extensions	0-1	1-2
IV.	"	Optional activities	0-1	1-2
V.	Afternoon	Recreational and leisure activities	10	5
VI.	"	Activities for the development and training of individual abilities	15	15
VII.	"	Recovery activities	-	5
Minimal number of activities/week			49	51
Maximum number of activities/week			51	53

Kindergartens with prolonged and weekly programme.

The curriculum plan is a compulsory curriculum document, which stipulates the types of activities on two age levels: level I for children 3-5 years of age and level II for children 5-7 years of age.

The curriculum plan gives details on the activities for two types of kindergartens: regular schedule and prolonger or weekly programme; it stipulates the minimum and maximum number of activities per week for both levels and disseminates the daily activities on stages.

The curriculum plan for preschool education contains also a range of topics

which could be used in optional classes. The curriculum plan corresponds to both age levels 3-5 years of age and 5-7 years of age. Kindergarten activities are different according to the children's age and the age level; the first level is concerned with socializing activities and the second one with the children's preparation for school. The timetables are drawn up based on the curriculum plan. The groups are either age homogenous or combined. The timetables are subjected to the Board's approval. They have to be completed before the beginning of the school year and displayed in a visible place.

The kindergarten is the institution which educates and fosters preschool children, namely children between 3 and 6-7 years of age. Its goal is to encourage the development of children's personality in their own pace and based on their innate abilities. These goals can be achieved only by play and not randomly, kindergartens have been called *the house of play.*[40]

Preschool education ensures the free, complete and harmonious development of child's personality in his own pace, based on his needs and supports his autonomous and creative training through activities specific for children 3-7 years of age.

Preschool activities respect the children's right to play as part of their activities and as method, technique and manner of education, based on the curriculum for preschool education.

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[40] G.Kelemen, Pedagogia preşcolară, Editura UAV, Arad, 2007, p.87.

Play is used in all daily activities. The activities differ according to the type of kindergarten. A daily timetable in kindergarten contains the following activities:

Stages	Hours	The daily timetable of a kindergarten	Teaching activities
Morning	7-8,30	The children's arrival to kindergarten	The teacher welcomes the children and discusses with the parents.
I	8,30-9	Breakfast	Plays and selected activities for various types of activity.
II	9,30-10,30	Joint activities	Compulsory group activities.
III	10,30-12	Complementary activities	Different games: musical, movement, outdoor games, entertainment games etc.
Afternoon IV	12-13	Lunch	Development of skills and behaviours
	13-15	Afternoon nap	-II-
	15-15, 30	Afternoon nap	-II-

Morning teaching activities are divided into three stages:

- stage I contains Games and activities selected by children and Activities on areas of activity,

- stage II contains Joint activities performed in groups according to the timetable,

- stage III contains Complementary activities.

Stage I begins with the children's arrival to the kindergarten. Then they play or chose the activities they want to perform; usually they organize themselves or the teacher slowly guides them to the interest centres. *The games and selected activities* are conducted individually or in small groups and their role is the children's socializing and initiation into the social and cultural environment they belong to. Oral and written communication is also goal of these activities. The teacher will divide the group on areas of interest for a better organization of the activity: *Library, The Nature's Corner, Constructions, The Doll's Corner* etc. She will also prepare teaching materials which will be distributed to each sector. The aim of these activities is to prepare the child in terms of teaching for

the joint activities.

Stage II contains joint activities which are compulsory for all children in a group. They are organized either as whole group activities or as activities on small groups. The main objectives of instructive-educational syllabus for kindergartens are achieved during these activities.

Joint activities vary in terms of timing according to the age of children; from 15-20 minutes with children 3-5 years of age and 30-35 minutes with children 5-7 years of age. The activities can last for 40-45 minute with the preparatory group, especially towards the end of preschool period. The aim is to accustom children to school activities. Joint activities are organized systematically, in detail and they are the most appropriate ways of achieving the instructive-educational objectives from the syllabus.

The curriculum plan details the areas of knowledge and they are divided into the following types of activity:

- speaking development activities,
- mathematic activities,
- environment knowledge,
- education for society,
- practical and household activities,
- musical education,
- visual art education,
- physical education.

The objectives of joint activities are regulated by the syllabus for kindergarten instructive-educational activities. Teachers select the weekly topics

and contents in order to meet the regulations of the syllabus but also based on the children's interests.

Stage III contains complementary activities and their role is to practice what has been learnt during joint activities, but in a recreational manner. Therefore, teachers use activities such as entertainment games, outdoor movement games, sport games, drama, puppet theatre, movies, computer games, walks, visits, etc.

Optional activities are selected by the teachers after discussing with the parents. They are conducted in groups of 10-15 children under the guidance of a kindergarten teacher or any other trained teacher (gymnastics, drawing, etc.), who works with the kindergarten teacher.

Extensions are extra activities, which are not compulsory. They are conducted according to the teacher's choice, based on the level of the group. These activities have to be planned in advance by the teacher and approved by the school inspector in charge with primary school education. One extension can be conducted with the level 3-5 years of age and two extensions for the level 5-7 years of age.

The statistical weight of activity types throughout a day is 50% frontal activities, 25% individual activities and 25% small group activities. They are organized the following manner:

- frontal and in small groups,

- individual and in small groups,

- frontal and individual.

Small group activities are predominant with selected activities, when children work on stimulation areas. The groups are built according to the children's options.

5.3 The Reggio Emilia Method in Early Education

The Reggio Emilia method stands for a philosophy that approaches preschool pedagogy, namely preschool and early school children's education in a different manner, where community and environment play an important role in child education.[41] This method joins child education, child well-being, children's fundamental rights with the support given to families. But where does this method come from? After World War II when the whole society was suffering, in a small Italian town, called Reggio Emilia, the community led by Loris Malaguzzi (1920-1994), teacher, philosopher and poet, set the basis of an association that would support children. They built schools with their bare hands and set the bases of a new philosophy on child education where community would play an important role. The Reggio Emilia Method is centred on the community and its culture but a fact worth mentioning is that its ideas are based on preschool education principles developed by researchers like John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, David Hawkins, Jerome Bruner, Howard Gardner.

Over time, Reggio Emilia approach developed and came to be known throughout the world as a viable method with highly formative qualities for children. Thus, in 1994 a non-profit organization was founded, called *Friends of Reggio Children International Association* [42] aiming at continuing Loris Malaguzzi ideas. At the annual conference *National Association for the Education of Young Children*, in Chicago, the USA, *North American Reggio Emilia Alliance* (NAREA)[43] was founded, aiming at: "*Education and research*

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[41]C.Rinaldi, *Documentation and assessment: What is the relationship? In, Making learning visible. Children as individual and group learners* (pp. 78–93). Reggio Emilia, Italy: ReggioChildren and Project Zero, 2001, p.64.

[42]http://zerosei.comune.re.it/inter/amici.htm.

[43]http://www.reggioalliance.org/.

to improve the lives of people and communities in Reggio Emilia and in the world".[44]

5.3.1 Loris Malagutti's Philosophy

In his philosophy, Loris Malaguzzi started from the belief that a child's education should start from the idea that each child is curious and creative. The child is not an individual with an empty memory that waits to be filled up with facts, data, figures and information. According to Reggio Emilia Method, the curriculum for early education and young schooling should be flexible and focused on child's needs. The curriculum design should be centred on child's needs and should be adjustable. The Reggio Emilia Method has as main objective the development in each child's consciousness the desire to learn and explore reality throughout his life.

5.3.2 Principles of Reggio Emilia Method

The Reggio Emilia Method promotes the community's involvement in child's education. In some respects this method has similarities with Montessori and Waldorf alternatives. For many parents, the moment the child starts school, preschool or primary school is an important but also concerning moment. Family will move to the second place while education will be taken over by an educational institution. This fact brings about a lower involvement of family in child's education, a separation within which different responsibilities are passed on from the family members to the pre/school institution. Hence the idea of community involvement to improves conditions for educating children.

Reggio Emilia school has a leader that informs the local council about all

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[44]http://reggiochildrenfoundation.org/.

school's problems and objectives. All members of the teaching staff lead the educational act according to the children's interests which are carefully considered through different methods. In order to achieve this desideratum, there are two teachers in each classroom who complement each other in everything that education means: care, supervision and work with children. There is also a trained art teacher (at least two art branches) that is responsible for a workshop. In a workshop, children find many and different materials from those found in nature to the ones in the media. They are free to make experiments with them, to use them as they want to because their aim is to develop the child's creativity and imagination. The teachers, the workshop responsible and all teaching staff are a team that works together for the child's benefit. The main orientations of Reggio Emilia Method are:
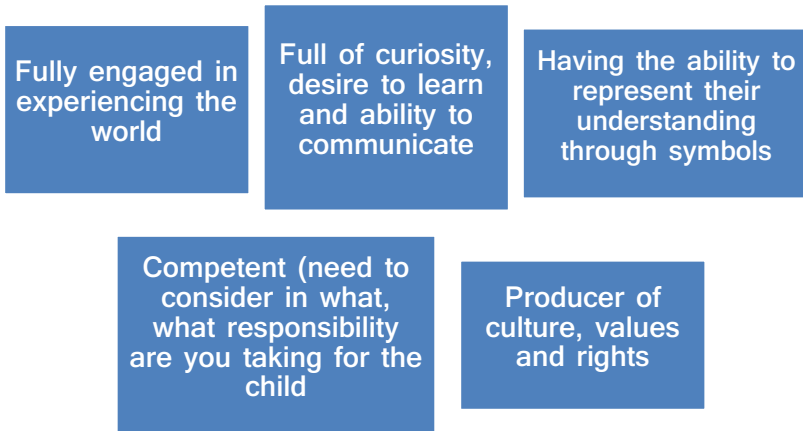
- child centred education,

- the need to prepare children for a free and democratic life,

- social responsibility towards the uniqueness of each child and openness towards his educational needs,

- emphasize the importance of triple relation: family, school, community,

- stimulation of communication and interrelating,

- progressive thinking,

- openness for research and experimenting performed by dedicated teachers;

- workshop activities,

- the need to maintain a real and mutual collaboration between school and community,

- stress on metacognition,

- conscious learning based on acceptance of the need to improve performance.

LEARNING BY DOING

RELATIONSHIP

COMMUNICATION

THOUGTHS
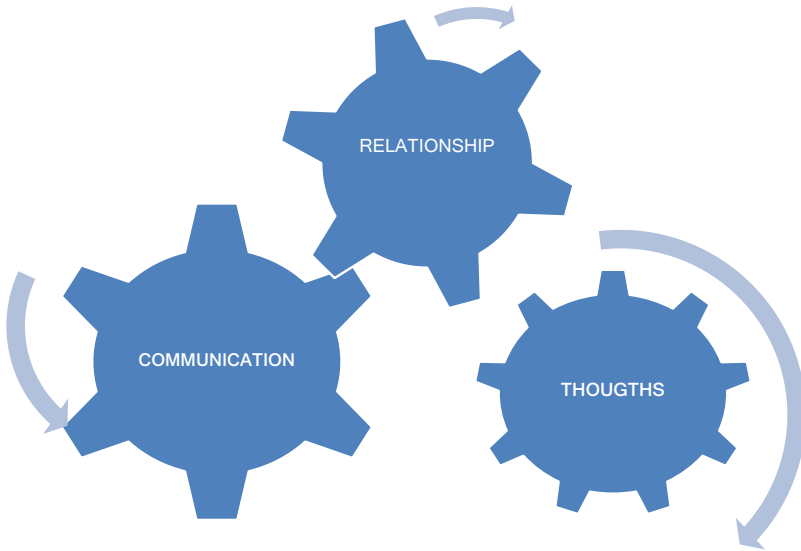
Reggio Emilia Method places great emphasis on the child's ability to recognize his formation, by developing innate potential and by revaluing the child's aspirations. The child is not an empty entity that waits for the educational factors to fill in that hole, the child is a personality in development, with interests, aspirations and a certain, non-recurring individuality, capable of following his own path in life, if helped by parents, teachers and society. In order for the child to achieve something, it is necessary to put an emphasis on child's communication and socializing abilities, to show affectionate care and to build confidence in their own forces.

VISION ON GAMES

Fully engaged in experiencing the world	**Full of curiosity, desire to learn and ability to communicate**	**Having the ability to represent their understanding through symbols**

Competent (need to consider in what, what responsibility are you taking for the child	**Producer of culture, values and rights**

Parents, school and community must create an educational environment where the child has the opportunity to communicate and relate to other children. They should create an environment that develops the communication and relating abilities, where he feels free but at the same time protected and loved, stimulated to explore and learn.

The three educational factors: parents, school and community collaborate and take part in children's education. Parents are actively involved in the life of the educational institution and participate in everything that means improvement and development of a proper educational environment. Therefore, they are encouraged to participate effectively in indoor and outdoor school activities. Family is regarded as a partner not as a consumer; it is part of the school's educational activity.

The teachers are those who set the contents of learning, the objectives that would be followed and fulfilled and the context in which they will be carried on.

The main goal is the child's benefit and the observance of his interests and fundamental rights.

The educational institution is designed to be an educational environment adapted to the requirement of child education according to his needs for exploration and learning, where special architecture is conceived as functional, challenging and open to exploration and learning. As Reggio Emilia Method lays emphasis on the learning space, it should offer children a feeling of safety and well-being and then be a cognitive stimulus that gives them the opportunity to interrelate, to motivate and develop their desire to explore new learning opportunities. Reggio Emilia Method aims at promoting speech development under a cognitive, symbolic ethical, metaphorical imaginative and relational aspect. The educational environment has to contribute to the promotion of these objectives, therefore we can compare the educational environment to a community in miniature that highlight culture and social ethics, prosocial attitudes and standards promoted by school curricula, as stated by the founder of this method: Loris Malaguzzi: *The environment should act as an aquarium which reflects the ideas, ethics, attitudes and culture of the people who live in it. This is what we are working towards*.[45]

Children are individuals with different paces of development, with different action and information process paces, with different pace of world understanding, therefore educational factors have to take into consideration these aspects and respect them Adults mostly regard children as their equals in what concerns world understanding and act consequently. They put to much pressure on their shoulders, rushing them all the time, not having patience to listen and guide them, making them grow up too fast.

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[45] http://www.reggioemilia.org.nz/pdf/PRINCIPLES OF REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH TO EARLY CHILDH, p.33, (acceded on 24th April 2013).

The Reggio Emilia Method focuses on the community, that is why it is so important that all educational factors: parents and teachers to communicate with children in all possible manners, to contradict each other, to argument and share their emotions through games: to laugh, to cry, to fight. Socializing and communicating in this way, children are parents will develop relations based on mutual trust, where everyone feels safe and not in a strong competition. Children feel good in a warm and harmonic environment. It leads to the development of positive feeling, animated by empathy. The preschool and primary school teachers' role is to give children the opportunity to take part in activities that make them aware of their capacity to acquire new knowledge. Educators must encourage children in being creative, to constantly learn even when facing error, to help them make connections between information, between what they know and want to know.

In each classroom there are two teachers, one of them registering observations on children's activity and the other one is the partner, the supervisor. The teacher's role is to coordinate children's activities, being:

- the child's co-partner in discovering the surrounding world,

- to challenge children to find answers, to solve the problem and to relate friendly,

- to elaborate educational projects starting from the child's ideas,

- to organize the educational environment in a pleasant and useful manner,

- to lead children towards new explorations and a proper understanding of the surrounding world.

As an important educational factor in a child's education, the teacher has to follow certain principles regarding child education. He will team up with the parents and they will follow the child's evolution and progress. The teacher will

record on sheets, video or audio support the child's progress, will maintain a close and open relation with the parents, all in the child's best interest. These documents that will contain observations, recordings discussions, deficiency in knowledge are a basis for the teacher in planning his future educational objectives. The whole teaching staff along with the parents will discuss the educational projects necessary for the children's proper development and they will decide together their educational path. The teacher will be the link between the institution, family and community. The idea of unity in educational requirements is challenging, this aspect of co-work involves responsibility from all factors.

The Reggio Emilia Method does not want to set a model, as Millikan stated in 2003: *The preschools and infant-toddler centres of Reggio Emilia do not provide a model, but rather the opportunity to reflect on our own educational theories, practices, and methods of organization*[46].

It is desirable to be an aspiration for teachers, parents and society in creating a better school for children, an educational environment according to the child's nature that would follow his best interest and desire to acquire education, a place that would reflect the ideals, beliefs and ethics of the society we live in.

The philosophy of Reggio Emilia Method raises some questions that we need to reflect upon. One concerns the amount of information that we take from this educational philosophy, how we adapt it to the Romanian educational system and how will we be able to apply it. The ideas advocated by Reggio Emilia Method are worth to be followed because they aim at the child's best interest and progress[47]:

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[46]Ibidem, p.34.

[47]Lella Gandini, Lynn Hill, Louise Cadwell, Charles Schwall, *In the Spirit of the Studio: Learning from the Atelier of Reggio Emilia (Early Childhood Education Series)*.

- it promotes everlasting values of society,

- it promotes the best ideas for education,

- it applies the child's right to education, like children with special educational needs that have the right to education in any institution they want to,

- it encourages games and team activities,

- teacher and child are viewed as partners in playing and learning,

- learning is not seen as a lineal process but a curl one, as a progressive process where teacher supervises the child's interests and assures necessary resources for a proper exploration and learning.

It is worth reflecting upon the Reggio Emilia Method that managed to create a real connection, a partnership between pre/school institution, family and community and which asserted the educational environment as the 3rd teacher.

The Reggio Emilia Method is an example on how teachers can involve children in their own formation through creative and motivating activities. Adults and children can learn together in a pleasant and useful manner, where everyone takes part in his own pace, using the resources he wants to. Children are regarded as members of the community with full rights and are encouraged to think freely and act autonomously.

Seminar Activities

Tasks and Applications

1. ▬

Write and argumentative essay of 150 words starting from Seneca's statement: "*Life is long enough if we know how to use it – and we have to use it for the achievement of the most important things*".

Working time 10 minutes.

Chapter 6

Play in Selected Activities and Stimulation Areas

This stage of kindergarten activities contains, as the name reveals it, games and activities selected by the children. Though they are selected by the children, the activities and games require the teachers' guidance. The child should feel free and unconstrained, but competent guidance and supervision are absolutely necessary. J. J. Rousseau, the famous philosopher, stated in his reference book "Emil or about education" that: Due to the child's reduced experience and lack of knowledge, the game couldn't continue and it would stop, the children 's attention focusing on other actions. The teacher's skilled intervention support children in completing the game.

Selected games are an important moment of influence, direction and development on a mental, moral and physical level. It is a proper moment to observe and coordinate the children's behaviour. Children have fun playing and they don't perceive the teacher's interference as constraining or disturbing. The child takes over desirable behaviour taught by the teacher without even noticing it because he is passionately involved in the play. We have to highlight that any activity conducted in kindergartens, any game should have an instructive-educational character. Therefore, kindergarten teachers will try to meet certain didactic requirements during the stage *Games and selected activities*:

- games and selected activities will be conducted so as not to break the principles of play activities. They should be fun and follow the rule of bringing children satisfaction,

- games and selected activities should achieve the general and specific objectives of preschool education. The first goal of playing is bringing pleasure to children; beyond this important aspects, the teacher should set certain short-term goals which she carefully persuades during the game and which she will achieve without damaging the children's play,

- Games and selected activities should be conducted under the teacher's careful guidance. Our statement is supported by the following arguments: not guided children will move on easily from one game to the other, from one play to another without finishing what they have started, they handle play superficially, change play into a random activity without any educational outcome. The purpose of all kindergarten activities is the development of children's personality on all its sides.

The teacher's interference engages all children in the game. She uses subtle ways of engaging them in the activity and her skills will help her smooth away dull, boring or shallow moments. When she feels that her group is bored, she can introduce the surprise element that arises the children's interest, inventiveness, imagination and initiative. The teacher shall help children overcome difficult moments and conflicts, and she will animate the game by convincing children to show interest and perseverance in completing the game. Educational situations offered by games can be used in such a manner that they would develop the children's mental and physical abilities.

6.1 Specific Objectives of Games and Selected Activities

General objectives regulate objectives with a higher degree of generalness and complexity and they focus on developing specific skills and abilities:

- offer children the proper environment to express their play abilities and availability,

- the develop the children's ability of enriching gradually the content of play and approach more and more complex topics and subjects, as their own knowledge, skills and play abilities improve,

- to ensure gradual transition from basic games, handling of objects to evolved creative games; to ensure transition from symbolic games to games with rules,

- to ensure the psychomotor development of children so as to switch from symbolic games and games with rules to more varied and comprehensive games in terms of content,

- to contribute to the stimulation of learning activities, recovery and compensation of lower functions and to the development of children's psychomotor availability,

- to create a pleasant atmosphere, good mood and pleasure for getting involved in kindergarten activities.

Specific Objectives

General objectives are reflected in specific objectives according to age. They specify how to organize and conduct Games and selected activities in kindergartens.

Small Section/Group (Children 3-4 Years of Age)

The specific objectives for small sections aim to:

- the children's guidance on the playground (room, sector/area/activity area, table, gym, kindergarten yard),

- development of effort abilities by constant engagement in play activities,

- development of analysers' sensitivity, of small muscles of the hand by the manipulation of toys and various objects used for playing,

- acquiring knowledge about the toys and objects they get in touch with during the play,

- stimulation of mental cognitive-affective processes which project reality in play activities,

- development of speaking by communication with playmates and the teacher during playing,

- building mental and motor operations by acting with toys and materials used while playing, solving problem-situations,

- development of children's general motor skills by gradual increase of movement coordination through playing,

- development of skills related to playing with accessible toys and materials in the beginning, then using imitation and creation games and in the end the development of abilities required by playing partner games.

Middle Section/Group (4-5 Years of Age)

Besides the already mentioned objectives, we should take into account the following:

- widening and deepening knowledge on toys and materials used for playing,

- selective awareness of inter-human relationships through gradual shift from imitation games to creative games, role plays, games with rules and the variety of topics,

- growing interest for certain play activities and development of abilities to complete these activities,

- systematic engagement of children in partner or collective play activities in order to make them socialize,

- correct the pronunciation and speaking errors, enrichment of vocabulary, activating it in the group during oral communication activities,

- development of desirable behaviours by practicing games with rules,

- development of creativity and imagination, of innate skills and abilities through play.

High Section/Group (5-6 Years of Age)

Besides the objectives set for small and middle section, we should add the following:

1. expending the coverage of play activities:

   - intensive practice of evolved symbolic games: creative games with subjects from everyday life, fairy-tales and stories,

   - enriching through games the life experience by approaching subjects of everyday life and the child's socio-cultural environment,

   - developing proper social behaviours by growing the child's interest for games with rules and expending their preference for this type of games,

   - systematic engagement of children in play activities in order to develop their psychomotor processes,

   - developing the children's thinking and creativity by engaging them in varied play activities and exercises,

   - Exploitation of instructive-educational valences of the game in order to correct deficiency,

   - stimulating the formative capacities of play used for the harmonious development of children,

2. practicing games which stimulate and develop pre-ABC elementary skills,

3. developing speaking by practicing games which involve using specialized, literary language,

4. developing civilized behaviour by practising games with rules with topics from everyday life, which determine children to use and follow the rules of verbal and situational behaviour,

5. stressing the recovery character of play in the children's preparation for school,

6. conducting complex games which stimulate the intellectual-cognitive and affective abilities in order to develop properly the child's personality,

7. stimulating the formative character of play and exercise to prepare the children's successful integration in the 1st grade.

6.2 The Contents of Games and Selected Activities

The content of games and selected activities in kindergarten is determined by the specific objectives set according to the children's age. These objectives are stipulated in the syllabus of instructive-educational activities issued by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Research. The new approaches of modern education give importance to mandatory objectives, the educational objectives being left at the teacher's choice. The contents of games and selected activities are recouped on groups and follow the children's individual and age characteristics.

Small Section (3-4 Years of Age)

The teacher will chose topics with symbolic names due to the children's young age and features:

1. Handling games and imitation games

These games are easy games which involve playing with toys or objects which imitate easy adults' actions. The most frequently used games in this

category are: Come to me! (doll, car, kitten, horse, bunny, etc.); We travel by… (car, bus, train, plane, bike, truck, carriage, wagon, lorry, motorbike, etc.); We are loading…! (car, carriage, train, wagon, bus, lorry etc.); We are …! (pilots, drivers, lorry drivers, doctors, mothers, teachers etc.); We cook for the …! (dolls, cat, canary bird, puppy, birds etc.); The doctor sees the patient! (doll, teddy bear, puppy, sparrow, bunny, clown, etc.); We bake! (rolls, breadsticks, sticks, doughnuts, bread, cakes, spaghetti, pizza, etc.); We make injections to…! (the doll, teddy bear, bunny, baby etc.); We chose construction materials and build! (houses, garages, blocks, kindergarten yards, doll's cots, trains, a fence, a bridge etc.); We select objects and play with them! (pair them, overlap them, place next to each other, etc.).

2. Onomatopoeic games

These games are pleasant for children and help them train their phonemic hearing and overcoming pronunciations difficulties *Let's do like …!* (the wind: woooh, woooh; the snake: hisssssss, hissssss; the horse: neigh, neigh; goose: honk, honk, duck: quack, quack; bee: buzz, buzz; cuckoo: cu-ckoo, cu-ckoo; cock: cockle-doodle-doo; hen: cluck, cluck, cot-co-dac; pig: oink, oink; cow: moo, moo; chicken: chick, chick; cat: meow, meow; *We play: it rains, the wind blows, the sun is up…hurray!*

3. Sensory games

- games for the development of tactile sensitivity:

Say how it is! (children touch with their palms different objects and say how they are in terms of tactile sense: cold-warm, smooth-rough, soft to the touch-unpleasant, slippery-not slippery, soft-rigid etc.; *Children play the magic sachet,* (children chose an object from the sachet and say what it is); Let's prepare the doll's bath! (preparing the water, not too warm, but not too cold).

- games for the development of visual sensitivity:

The Toy Shop! Say what's small, say what's big? Pick a balloon! (blue, red, green, yellow);

- games for the development of hearing sensitivity:

Say who called your name! Where does the sound come from! How have I sung? How does the(cat, car, bell, plane, sparrow etc.) make,

- games for the development of taste sensitivity:

How does it taste? (sweet, sour, bitter, salty), *Say what you ate?* (the child closes the eyes and gets something to eat: candy, peanuts, fruit etc. and has to guess what it was);

- games for stimulating oral communication: Tell your name to the teddy bear; Who is your friend? Chose a toy and say how it is! Tell your doll how you've played today! Tell us how you help your mum! Tell us what cartoon you've liked best,

- games for training correct pronunciations: Repeat after me! reciting: Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers, or Count like me,

- games of spatial orientation: Where is the doll hiding? Where has the swallow flown? Run to me! Run to the bunny, the dwarf, fly, fly! (children raise their arms and wave them when hearing an object or being that flies),

- logical-mathematic games: Let's build a train from the pieces of Logi I, Place me at my house! (yellow pieces in the yellow box, red pieces in the red box, etc. or small pieces in the small box, big pieces in the big box); Let's build a train from squares! (circles, triangles),

- movement games with lyrics and song: Going shopping! Dressing up the doll! Gardening! The doll's birthday! The sachet with surprises! (which

can contain personal objects, writing objects, fruit, vegetables, various toys; the child will pick up an object, describe it and say what it is used for),

- movement games with lyrics and song: The Bear is sleeping, The Handkerchief, The cat and the mouse, the Crown, The Stone bridge etc.,

- attention games: Stop! (the children walk in a row and at the teacher's command: stop, they stop), Touch your …! (nose, mouth, ears, eyelashes, eyebrows, etc.); Say who walked away! (toys are placed in front of the children, they close their eyes while the teacher extracts one; children open their eyes and say what toys has walked away); Say if you've guessed! (the teacher selects a child and says that the colour of his blouse is …., the child has to validate or invalidate her answer),

- games for learning behaviour rules: Ask nicely the shop assistant for a toy! How does the doll say after it has eaten? Tell the teddy bear how to greet when it comes to kindergarten,

- games for the development of household abilities: Let's order the toys! We care for the plants! He help serve the meal! We arrange the chairs around the table, We arrange the chairs etc.

Middle Section (4-5 Years of Age)

The number of activities and games increases at this age and so does their complexity, especially in terms of content. Children are more independent in selecting the games and their play partners, and they life the play intensely.

The play actions are still simple; the stages are not enough linked one to the other and conflicts emerge. Below, there are some topics:

- games of social cohabitation: Acting like mum, In the kindergarten, Acting like family, Hairdressers, Acting like barbers, Acting like doctors etc.

- Construction games:

  - on flat surfaces: *Train, Slide, Baby cot, Garage, Children's park*, with construction kits: Vitocomb, Plasticom, Arco, Lego etc.

  - on vertical surfaces: *Block, House, Racket, Castle* etc.

  - technical constructions: *Ladder, Mill, Handkerchief, Envelope, Plane* from various materials: paper, wood, plasticine etc.

  - constructions in sand with various shaped or imaginary: *Castle, Car, Train, Slide, Gantry, My Block of Flats*, etc.

- Symbolic motor games: The cat and the mouse, The fox and the hens, The wolf and the sheep, Birds and the hunter etc.

- Sport and entertainment games: Touch the bell, Relay race, Who arrives first, Who jumps further, Walk in the woods etc.

- Games with traffic rules: Red-stop, Green-cross! The Traffic light, Walking in the city etc.

- Games for the development of tactile sensitivity: Say what you feel! Say how it is! Warm-cold! etc.

- Games for the development of visual sensitivity: Say what's the colour of the doll's dress? What is the colour of the autumn? What has changed? etc.

- Games for the development of hearing sensitivity: What do you hear? Listen carefully! Say what instrument has played?

- Games for the development of taste sensitivity: Say how it smells! What taste do you feel? Choose sweet food! etc.

- Games for stimulating oral communication: Repeat after me! Wireless phone! Say what it is and what it is used for! Say how it is! etc.

- Games for training correct pronunciations: The snake and the bee! Say correctly! Where was I wrong, Correct the mistake! etc.

- Attention games: What have I changed! Say where the dwarf lives! What have I change at the doll's look? etc.

- Logical-mathematic games: Place the piece to its colour! Arrange the pieces according to the shape! Say where are many! Say where are few! What piece is missing! etc.

- Movement games with lyrics and song: The Bunny Hop, The Dwarfs and the hedgehogs, The soldiers are crossing etc.

- Games with socio-moral character: Visiting! The doll's birthday! Walking in the neighbourhood! Welcoming the guests! etc.

- Movement games with lyrics and song: The kindergarten and its neighbourhood! Let's meet our neighbours! When is it happening? Who comes after me? (games for learning the hour, the days of the week, the seasons).

- Games on analysis and mental synthesis: What's not alike, What doesn't fit? Puzzle, a whole from halves, Rebuilding the object! etc.

- Other play activities: Cutting autumn leaves, Drying leaves carpet, Watering the flowers, Preparing the room for joint activities etc.

High Section (5-6 Years of Age)

The games used in selected activities are more complex; the statistical share of partner games increases, more responsibility is assigned to roles which reflect aspects of the children's social life. Children are interested in play at this age.

The content of games for high section is richer and appropriate for the age of the players.

- Games of social coexistence: The Toy shop, Acting like constructers, Acting like astronauts, Acting like, football players, Acting like pupils, In the bookshop, At school, Acting like teachers, School awaits us etc.

- Games with fairy tale and story topics, drama: Acting like Little Red Riding Hood, Acting like Snow White, Acting like Cinderella etc.

- Construction games: to those already mentioned, we add constructions of small materials, materials from nature and waste materials: Our city, The car park, We build our own toys, Animal farms, Children's park etc.

- Symbolic motor games: The hunter hiding, The fox in the henhouse, The chipmunks and the peanuts, Who gathers the most chestnuts – sport competition, The rumpled dog, Little birdie – move your nest, The teddy bear race, Wake up penguin! The flags' relay race! Country, country we want soldiers etc.

- Sensory games: What has the postman brought, What has mum bought from the market? What follows? (games for learning the hour, the days of the week, the seasons).

- Intellectual games for stimulating oral communication, training pronunciation, attention, analysis, mental synthesis, abstraction, generalization, logical-mathematic games, imagination, self-control and inhibition, knowledge of the environment: How have you spent your holidays, Correct what the painter has done wrong! Say what has changed! I say one, you say many, Mum and the child, Butterflies come to flowers! Find the pairs, How are they called altogether? Find the way home, Let's finish the story, Let's make a painting, What time is it? Say a word that starts with …! Find the matching word, Let's build a toy for the small section etc.

- Movement games with lyrics and song: The peasant is on the field, The crown is round, The stone bridge, The bear is napping, Counting etc.

- Games with socio-moral character: How to celebrate the classmates' birthday? Visiting, At the puppet theatre, We have guests, At the church, How do we pray, How to behave properly, What to do when mum's angry with us?

- Intellectual games for stimulating oral communication, training pronunciation, attention, analysis, mental synthesis, abstraction, generalization, logical-mathematic games, imagination, self-control and inhibition, knowledge of the environment: The game of funny happenings! Correct what I did wrong! Say what has changed! Many, few, Rebuild the hedgehog's path, The winner takes it all, The letter game, In the fairy tale world, What child has left? When does it happen? Solve quickly and well, Jumbled stories, The chain of weaknesses, Journey on Terra, How is it made? Continue the story! Let's invent stories! Who's the character etc.

- Other play activities: Little householders, The friends of nature, Caring for the nature, Feeding the fish and turtles from aquarium, Collecting dry leaves from the yard, Cleaning the flower garden of weeds etc.

6.3 Preparation of Games and Selected Activities

Games and selected activities are conducted in different moments from the daily timetable. The first stage, i.e. between the children's arrival and the beginning of joint activities is the most appropriate time to engage children in pleasant games and activities. Well prepared selected activities are a good way to start the day, create good mood, are highly motivational and determine children come happily to kindergarten. This type of activity is conducted in the classroom. Depending on the kindergarten's logistic opportunities and technical

endowment, the teaching area should be organized according to psychopedagogic criteria. Thus, teachers will organize the area in a manner that gives children the option to select from various games and activities. The classroom is divided into areas of interest, different from one group to the other, depending on the children's age. There will be around 3-4 areas of interest for the small section and the number can be double for the preparatory group. The playground should be spacious enough, so that children could play and the play partners could talk to each other efficiently. There should also be enough space to move around without children disturbing one another.

The area used for selected activities will be endowed with toys for boys and girls: *The doll's corner, The car garage, The creation corner*. All toys and materials used during this type of activity will be carefully selected in compliance with certain standards. Toys should be:

- clean, made of material that doesn't affect the children's health or injure them,

- aesthetic, pleasant, attractive, colourful; they should be as real as possible, easy to handle and have a good mobility,

- didactic, functional, symbolic; they should suggest new play topics and engage the children's imagination and creativity.

In the *doll's corner,* children will find: dolls of various sizes, furniture, doll buggies, dishes, medical kits, hairdressing kits, construction kits, cuddly toys, electronic devices, plastic animals.

The car garage corner contains cars of various shapes and sizes, planes, helicopters, ships, traffic kits and other accessories.

The creation corner has kits for role play activities: costumes for various roles from the social life, fairy tales, stories and for drama; various accessories such

as masks, robes, aprons, hats, make-up kits for children, jewellery, glasses, shields and leaflets etc.

The kindergarten teacher will prepare the materials in advance, i.e. before the children's arrival, for activities conducted in subgroups on stimulation areas. The purpose of these activities is the children's preparation for joint activities. When children come into the classroom, they can choose the activity they are interested in or their favourite games.

In the *Library,* children will find books with illustrations, stories, colouring books, sets of board games, leaflets, scrabble, puzzles, children magazines etc.

In the *Science* sector there are leaflets with domestic animals and birds from different regions, creatures from rivers and oceans from various parts of the world, science magazines for pre-schoolers, colouring books, tokens and kits with numbers, magnetic boards, domino, puzzle, Logi I kits, materials, plastic materials used for counting, copybooks and books.

The *Art* sector contains colouring pages, crayons, painting colours, paint brushes, napkins, water pots, colouring books, worksheets, glue, materials from nature, seeds, cards, pictures for cutting, coloured paper, wire rods, etamine, strings of beads, canvas, rope, pasta, scissors, waste: spools of thread, curl paper, wool, cotton, flowered material, raffia, individual worksheets, etc.

The *Construction* sector contains kits like: *Lego, Incastre, Vitocomb, Plasticon, Arco,* the sand box. The inventory of materials and toys renews periodically. This manner, the teacher avoids monotony and stimulates the children's interest for action and play.

All selected games and activities have a formative role. They mix pleasure and usefulness and are a way of enriching the children's knowledge in a pleasant manner.

6.4 Guidance in Games and Selected Activities

Although these games and activities are mostly activities selected by children according to their likes, they are still guided constantly by the teacher because:

- all kindergarten activities have an instructive-educational character,

- all activities conducted by children in kindergartens have a specific aim,

- all kindergarten activities, games or frontal activities require the teacher's competent interference,

- all games and activities fulfil teaching tasks.

Handling games are predominant in the small section. Children handle toys and objects and they are subjected to the educational process by learning how to work with these objects. Children have to know where they can take the objects from, how to work with them, hold them and wear them and how to name them properly. The teacher will take into account all these aspects and will interfere subtly to engage children in the play. For example, children sit and play individually with their favourite toy; the teacher engages them in the play using the following strategy. She tells them that a toy is missing and makes them search for it; after they have found it, the teacher says she is injured and has to be taken to the doctor; one child is the doctor, one is the taxi driver, another one is the nurse and so a handling game can be changed into a creative games with topics from everyday life.

Children from the middle section tend to play imitation games; for instance, girls can repeat the doll's feeding and rocking action for a long time. The teacher can interfere to cheer up the girls' play by giving them suggestions: the wash the dolls, to dress them up, to take them for a walk, etc. She will do the same for boys, who can play with cars for a very long time. The teacher suggests them to build garages for the cars; the garage can be placed in the

basement of a block of flats, etc. Thus, children are engaged in various actions. If the games are static, the teacher will gently interfere and determine children to play the game she wants. In case of conflicts, the teacher's intervention is absolutely necessary, but it should be made carefully and with pedagogic skills. Handling and imitation games require the teacher's interventions to revive the game, to engage children in dynamic activities such as the movement games: *The stork and the frogs, The fox and the chickens, The hawk and the hens, The chipmunks and the peanuts* etc. Children like playing these games because they mix movement with onomatopoeia; they have rules and are easy to play.

Creative games require the teacher's guidance, too. They are divided into:

- creative games with everyday life topics,
- games with topics from fairy tales and stories,
- drama.

The teacher will suggest the children from small section, easy creation games, due to the narrowness of their horizon. They will play games like: acting like a doctor, acting like a chef, acting like a mother and she will supervise the children's activity, interfering with solutions that enrich the content of educational games. She can tell children that she urgently wants to arrive to the kindergarten and needs a ride; she can suggest them to build a car from the furniture they find in the classroom or just imagine one with a plastic circle instead of a wheel. Once the game begins, the teacher can suggest different solutions: the car has stopped on the way, it broke down and somebody should find a mobile phone and call the garage; another child is the mechanic and should fix the car etc.

The teacher should take charge of the creative game in the small and middle section and thus avoid conflicts. They can arise due to the children's egocentric

character. The teacher plays the leading part and guides the other's play. She has the opportunity to teach children how to play a role, giving them behavioural models in various situations and stages of the game.

Creative games are better shaped at level II; children are free to behave as they want to; she plays a supporting role or can even leave the game and just discretely follow the children. She should interfere only when her help is needed.

The teacher plays an important part in creative games with topics from fairy tales and stories. These games have to be prepared in advance. The teacher plans the creative games and takes into consideration the following aspects:

- the story should be familiar to the children,
- it should be accessible for their age,
- the game should be suggested by the teacher,
- the game will be played under the teacher's guidance and supervision.

Drama games are enjoyed by children and they want to practice them immediately after they have heard a story. The roles will be assigned under the teacher's guidance; children will use some elements of scenery and costumes and will move on to playing the game. Children follow the logical unfolding of events from the story, they will try to reproduce as accurately as possible the lines and imitate the characters' gestures.

Drama¸ though considered games, require preparation and time for elaboration and are conducted only occasionally, at events and school celebrations. Because dramas are staged stories and fairy tales, they have to follow certain steps and certain elements should be taken into account. Dramas are prepared carefully before staging. They are rehearsed, the roles are assigned

and learnt separately by each child and then staging is made in the most appropriate conditions. The interpretation should be as fluent as possible. Each character wears costumes similar to the character he is interpreting and the set is also close to the set of the original story.

Dramas play an important part in developing proper language, fluidity in speaking, understanding the metaphorical meaning of words, using dialogue, understanding the story and shaping the children's behaviour, and not at least, developing the child's memory.

Games with rules required guidance, therefore teachers should guide and prepare children throughout their play, especially that at this age, children are not concerned with obeying rules (Fromberg, D. P., 2002). The ability to operate with intrinsic rules occurs after the age of six. The games with rules are absolutely necessary in the preschool teaching process because they are useful in the instructive-educational activity.

Children enjoy playing them, even though they have to obey certain rules. These games can be conducted only under the teacher's guidance at this age. If they are unsupervised, children tend to give up playing.

Games with rules introduce something new and unique, i.e. the excitement; children develop their competitive abilities and thus shape their character.

We can draw the conclusion that games and selected activities are found in various types of activity. Although they are selected by children, the activities require guidance from a competent and skilled teacher. The teacher has to follow certain psychopedagogic requirements: all activities should be viewed as games, as play activities and should be pleasant for children. They should feel free and be allowed to express themselves. The games and selected activities will be conducted according to the regulations of the kindergarten syllabus for

the education and preparation of children for school and life. All games will rely on teaching principles. The kindergarten teacher will consider carefully each stage of a kindergarten activity in her attempt to make games and activities more efficient in terms of their formative value. Formalism, conformity and monotony should be avoided during games and selected activities. The teachers' main and constant objective is to engage all children in games and selected activities.

Seminar Activities

Tasks and Applications

1. ━

Starting from the following statement: *"Teaching is causing science in the child's mind, helping him to use his natural power of reason" - Sf.Thomas d' Aquino*) write as structural essay of 150 words.

Working time 10 minutes.

2. ━

3. ━

4. ━

5. ━

6. ━

Chapter 7

Play, Way of Conducting Joint Activities

Play, represents the most appropriate way of conducting joint activities. The specific objectives of each type of activity can be achieved through play, when the tasks are well set and the play takes logical steps for the achievement of operational objectives (Preda, Viorica, 1999). The teacher projects the weekly activity plan according to the objectives set by the instructive-educational syllabus for kindergartens. She has to link the stages to the selected topic.

We present a daily activity plan for the topic *Autumn* in the preparatory group.

Stage I – activities on activity sectors

- Board games: Sorting fruit and vegetables (tokens),
- Constructions: Boxes and baskets for vegetables and fruit;
- Art: Baskets for fruit and vegetables(drawing),
- Role play: Acting like chefs.

Stage II

1. Joint activity: Speaking activities.

Topic: "*Sentences, words, syllables*"

Type of activity: knowledge reinforcement.

Completion: didactic game: *Say further.*

General objectives:

- reinforcing the ability to divide words into syllables and formulating sentences; stating the number of words from a sentence.

Operational objectives:

- to divide correctly words into syllables,

- to formulate grammatically correct sentences,

- to state the number of words from a sentence.

Methods and techniques: conversation, explanation, exercise, problematizing.

Didactic resources: costume *Autumn fairy*, autumn basket, tokens, toys, bag, worksheets, crayons.

Bibliography: *The syllabus for instructive-educational activities for kindergartens, Bucharest, 2005.*

Duration: 35-40 minutes.

2. Artistic-craft activity.

Modelling – *Baskets for fruit and vegetables*.

Operational objectives: to model the given topic through movements of kneading, flattening, rolling; to reproduce as accurately as possible a basket (based on the model).

Stage III – Complementary activity

- Movement game *Touch the leaf*,

- Game with lyrics and song: *The wind blows the leaves.*

7.1 Play in Speaking Activities

For *Speaking development* activities the syllabus mentions the following general objectives:

- development of communication and coherent speaking,

- vocabulary development,

- using grammar structures,

- development of eloquence in oral communication,

- development of written communication.

These objectives can be customized into reference objectives and can be also operational if adapted to the age of children. The contents are selected according to contents and their aim is to acquire knowledge and train verbal and written behavioural skills (Kim, S., 1999). The contents can be achieved using the didactic game.

The following didactic games can be used to learn parts of speech which designate objects from the child's close environment: toys, plants, fruit, vegetables, furniture, dishes, clothes, parts of objects, actions and states: *What does your letter contain? What had the painter done wrong? Say when it happens? The sachet with surprises! Say what's it made of?*

The following games can be used to develop vocabulary with words which designate phenomena, state, space relationships, characteristics: *Say what's going on? When does it happen, Where has the dwarf moved? Say everything you can about the objected you've got!*

Didactic games such as: *What toys has the doll got? Say how it is?* can be planned when teaching antonyms: big-small, strong-weak, smart, clever-stupid, and didactic games like: *How is it called?* for knowing and understanding synonyms: cat (moggy), rabbit (bunny), horse-crock etc.

We can use certain didactic games to understand the denotative and connotative meaning of words, which define research actions for the identification of objects' qualities and features (to smell, to smooth, to lift, to

blow, to push, to squeeze etc.). The games are: *Say what we have to do?* (to smell the perfume of flowers, to smooth the blanket, to move the buggy, to clean up etc.), *Say what you know about…?*

The grammar forms and constructions of cause-effect type, temporal and spatial relationships can be reinforced using didactic games: *Say why it has happened this way?* (mum got angry because the girl didn't listen to her, if Dan hadn't played with the ball on the street, he wouldn't have injured himself; the kids had been eaten by the wolf because they hadn't listened to their mum; it's night because the sun has set etc.); *When does it happen?* (Maricica wakes up in the *morning,* she has lunch at *noon*, she goes for a walk in the *afternoon,* she watches cartoons in the *evening*, *at night* she goes to bed); *Where has the butterfly sat?* (*up* in the tree, *down* on the grass, *to the left, to the right, under* the umbrella etc.)

Models of nouns in the singular and the plural, the genders, cases, verbs in different tenses and moods, sentences and clauses with temporal and cause subordination can be practiced using didactic games: *I say one, you say many! Whose name is it? Whose hat is it? Remember what you did yesterday? How will I spend my holidays! How have I spent my holidays? Say what you're doing now! Why has it changed? Why do we learn correct speaking?* etc.

The grammar means (the flexion of nouns typical for certain cases, the suffixes: -ţel, -işor, -uţă etc. for word "creations) can also be learnt through didactic games: *How do we cuddle the chicken*? (chick), horse (horsey), calf (baby beef), cat (kitten) etc.

Didactic games such as: *Say how it's called? Read the picture and say what you see? How is it? Chose a token and name the object from the picture?* etc., are used for reinforcing knowledge of: polysemantic words (power, head) etc., comparisons, epithets, compound words.

Sounds can be practiced through didactic games: *What's the first sound of? What the last sound of? Say a word with a!* (*m ,d, r, s, t* etc.).

We can also use didactic games to make children understand the difference between intonations and tones: *Say how the doll talks when it's angry? Read the picture and say what you've seen? Talk like the character from the story!*

Words-general representations (gender-species), of the following type "toys", "clothes", "furniture", "fruit", "vegetables", "dishes" can also be used in didactic games like: *Enumerate as many fruit as possible!, What do you call them altogether?* etc.

Didactic games are also useful for the understanding and dissemination of sounds and sentences: *Let's build a word with the sound m! Let's build a sentence with the word mother! Let's add another word to the sentence! complete the word with the missing sound! Complete the sentence with the missing word! I made an error, correct it! Let's write the word! (a dash for each sound you hear), Let's count the words from the sentence! (children draw a dot on the blackboard for each word from the sentence)*, Let's divide into syllables! *Sentences, words, syllables, sounds! My favourite book!*

The following didactic games are used to develop the habit of using politeness words: *How does a child speak politely*? *Pair games*! (the game is conducted in pairs; they practice roles for using polite speaking and common phrases).

For the improvement of oral communication, vocabulary enrichment, and fluid and accurate expression, we can use the following didactic games: *Princess and princesses from fairy tales, Recognize the character and the story! In the world of fairy tales! Describe what they do!* (non-verbal language: mimicry, gestures), *Find the proper word! Jumbled story!*

The teacher can introduce various play elements during didactic games and make them more attractive (their role is to animate boring or repetitive moments). She can also organize competitions (rivalry always awakens the children's interest), set rewards at the beginning of the game (They motivate children).

Didactic games, through the teaching tasks specific for each play, offer children the opportunity to learn accurate and coherent speaking, clear expression of their thoughts, knowledge acquisition and also develop their intellectual habits, doing something what they enjoy. The contents can refer to topics such as: man, society, nature, human activities etc.

7.2 Play in Environmental Knowledge Activities[48]

There are plentiful didactic games for *Environmental knowledge.* They are attractive and are used especially for the retention of children's knowledge. Below are some games that can be conducted with children for the following areas:

A. Man- living being:

a) The man's characteristics and features: people are different in terms of physical appearance, gender, age, race; they have reason, use articulated speech, behave properly, possess memory, hear, see, think, love, invent; work, learn and rest: *What activities do people conduct? The job I like! How is he and what does he make? What does he want to become? Help the tailor! Guess what objects do I need for school! What to wear?*


[48]Pictures taken from the website www.didactic.ro.

b) Features of human aspect (racial aspects), the spatial position, the functions of various internal and external organs: *Where does the man live? Trip around the world! Let's discover the human body! What is it used for?*
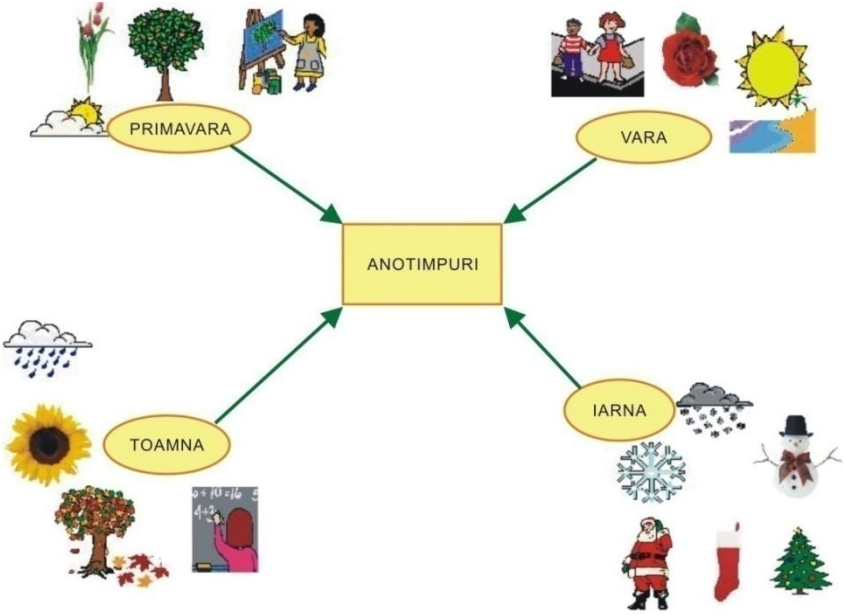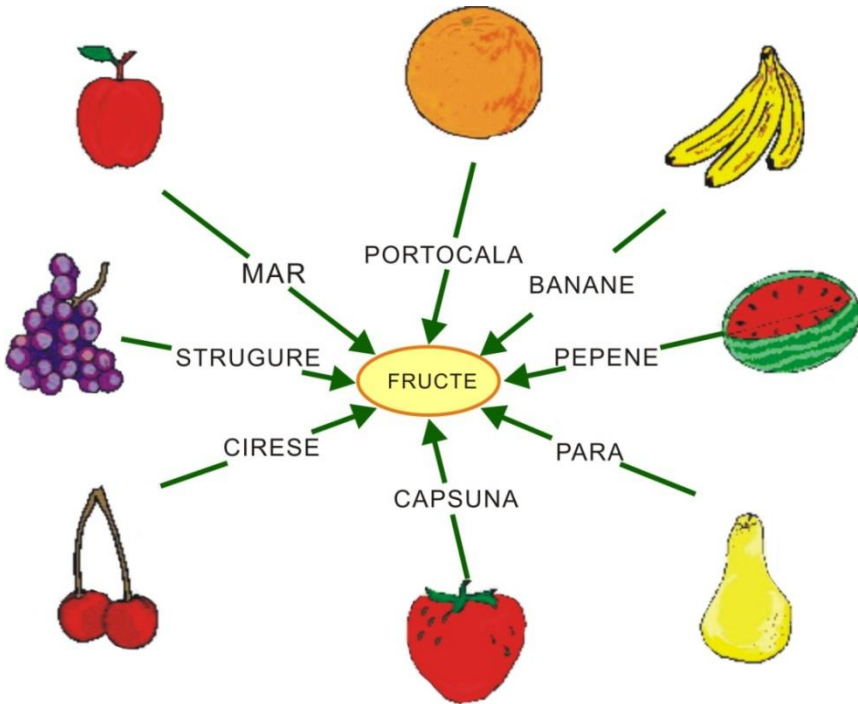
c) Sensations caused by various physiological needs: *Say what you feel? The magic sachet! How does it taste like?*
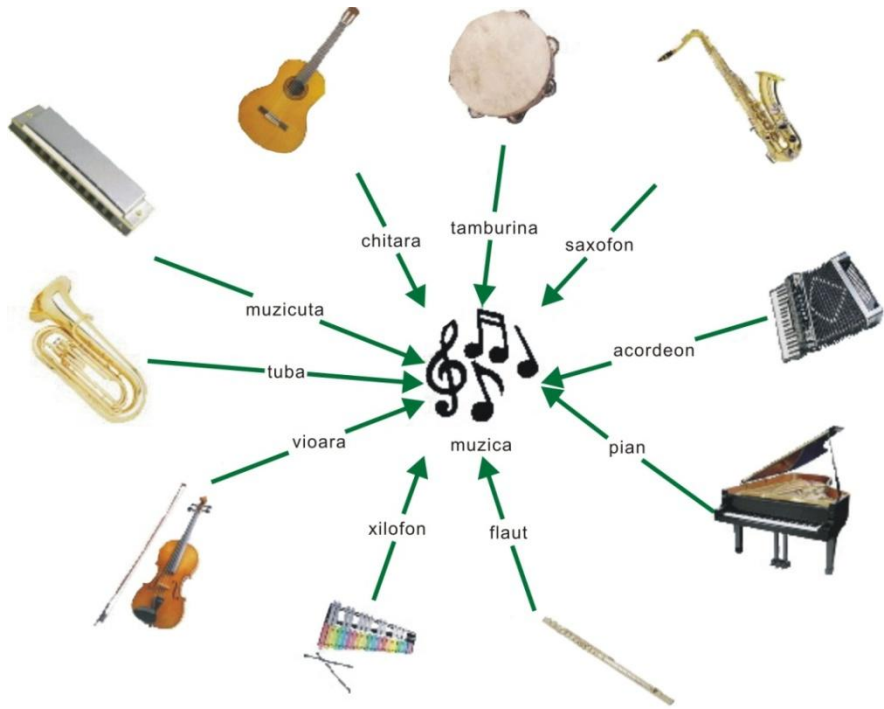
d) The human needs and the hygienic usage of personal objects: *The box with surprises, What do you have to do? Going sledging!*
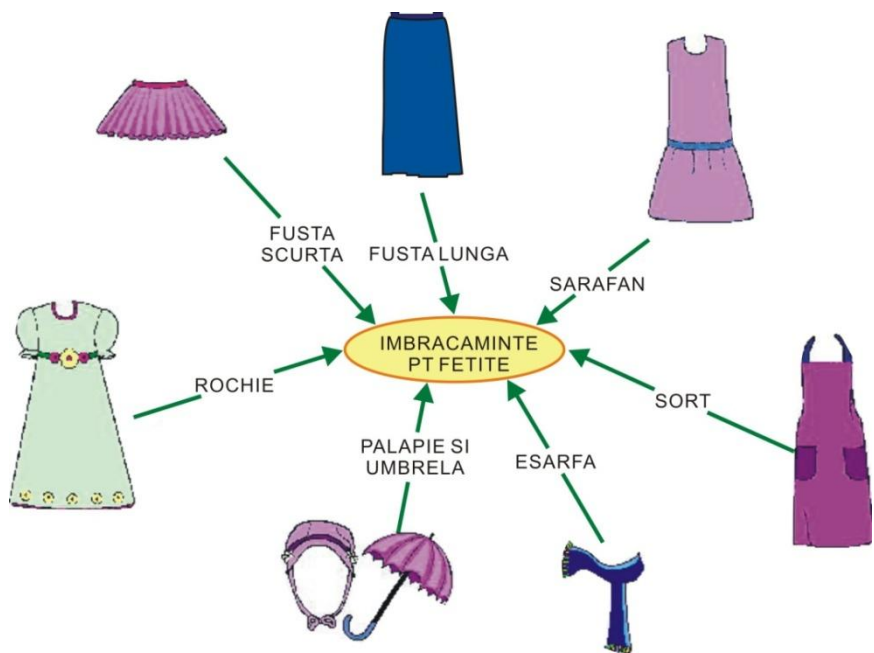
e) Food consumed by humans and their role in the development of their body:

   The basket with vitamins!

f) I and other people. Civilized behaviour (greeting, relationships children-children, child –society): *Wheel of fortune! The travelling postman! I and my family!*

g) Relationships: man – nature - society. The man's activities depending on the season, Clothing in different seasons, modern means of transport and issues related to environmental safety. Holidays around the year: *When does it happen? Travelling! We are getting ready for holidays! Little ecologists! At Christmas!*
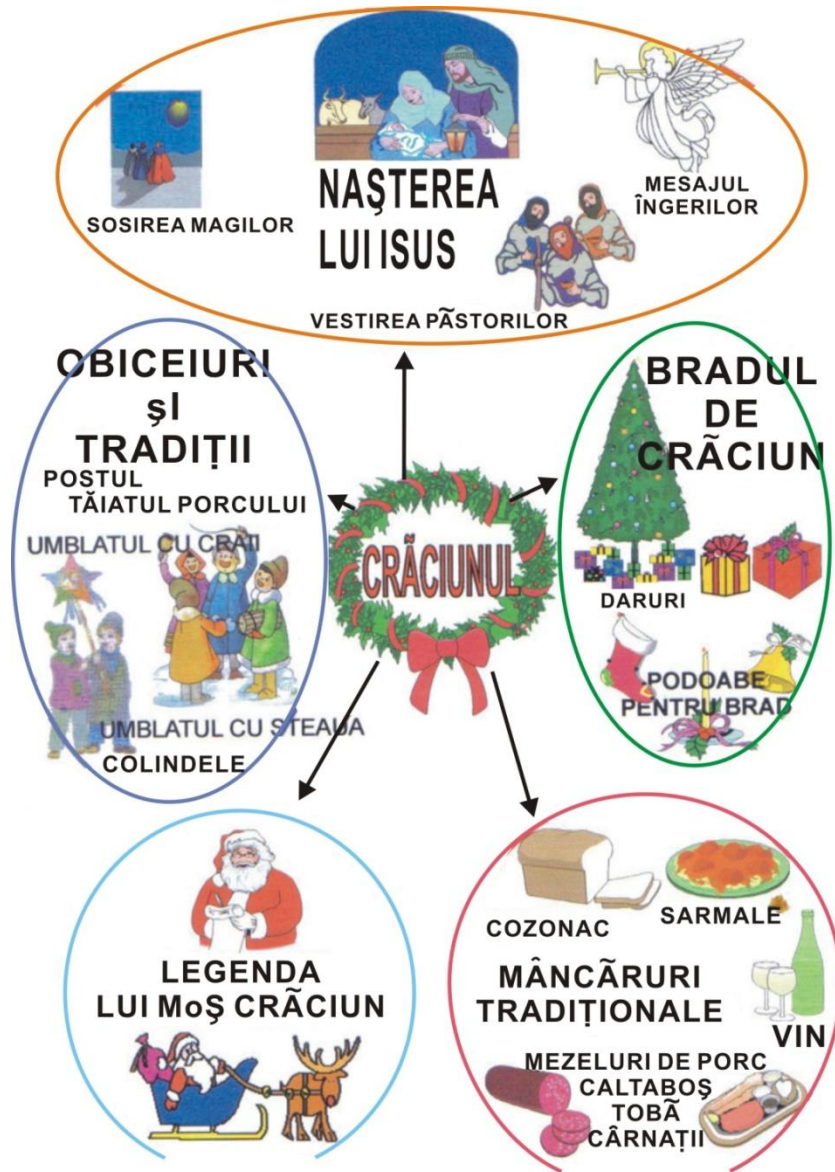
B. Nature with its elements, features and characteristics:

a) The Earth, the water, the Sun, the air, the fire – the basis of nature's integrity. The main element of the universe (the Moon, the Sun, the planets,

land, cosmic vehicles): *Travelling to the Cosmos! Fantastic trip.*

b) Recognitions of natural phenomena (wind, blizzard, rain, snow, frost, hail, lightning, storm, thunder) when they happen: *Spring's here! The seasons!*

c) Living beings: Breath, eat, move, grow, reproduce, adapt to various conditions. Inanimate objects: do not breath, do not feed themselves, do not grow, do not reproduce: *Tell me what you know about…! Recognise the object from the picture! It's a living being, it's not a living being! Who guesses, wins!*

d) Four seasons, their sequence and specific phenomena: *The wheel of seasons! When does it happen? After me comes...?*
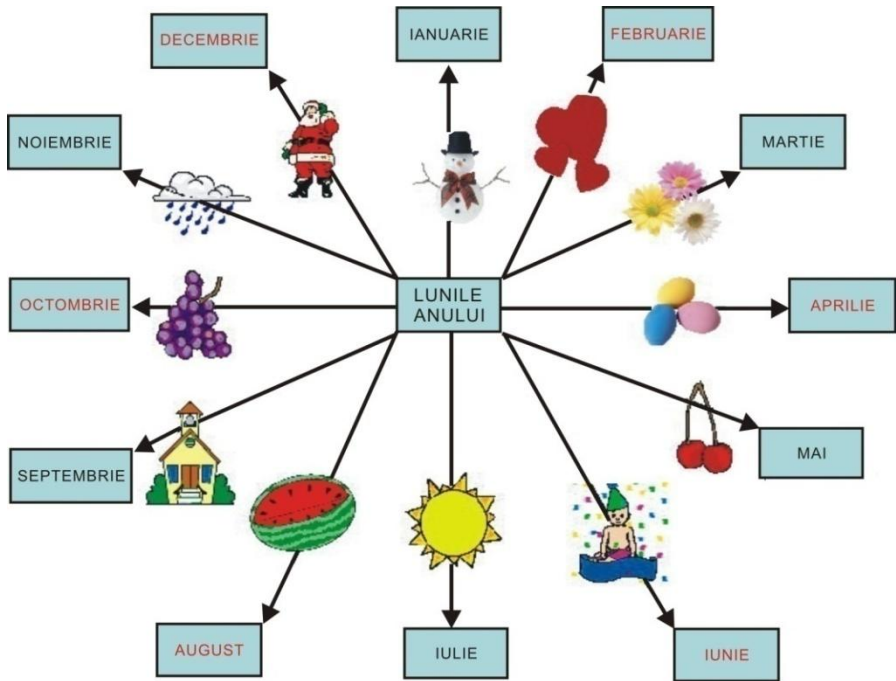
e) The living organisms' manners of adapting to seasonal changes: lower temperature, light intensity, wilting vegetation, disappearance of insects, bird migration etc.: *Where have they hidden? Say who you are!*
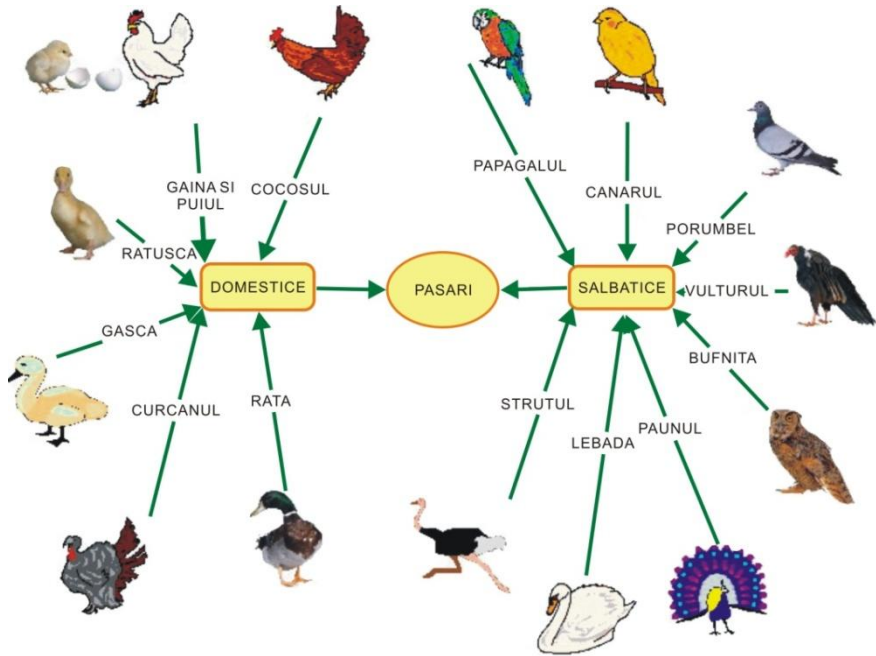
f) The plants' adaptation peculiarities to environment: root, stem, branches, leaves, multiplication, importance in nature and human life: *The naughty envelope! The troublesome game! The flower garden, The orchard! The mystery of forests!*
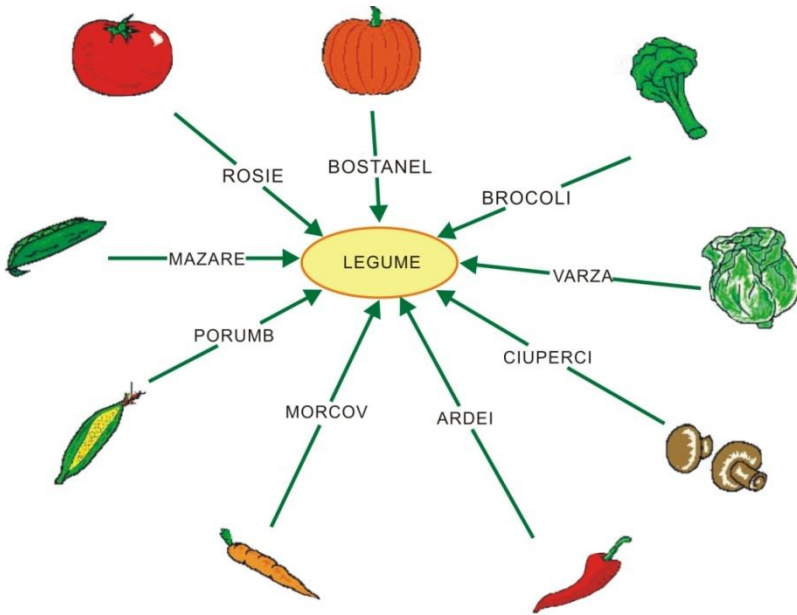
g) The animals' adaptation peculiarities to the environment (fish, birds, mammals, insects). Plants as living organisms, their structure, root, stem, leaves, seeds, characteristics, living conditions, nutrition, importance. Ornamental plants: *Who knows, wins, The florists, The greengrocer's.*
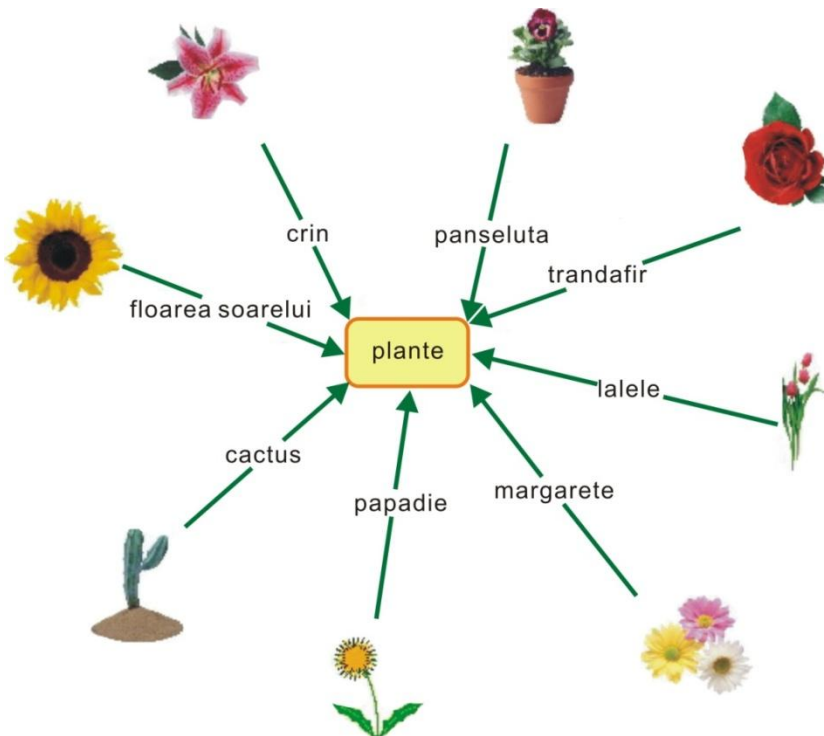
h) Animals as living organisms, can be of various types: insects, fish, amphibians, birds, mammals; characteristics, living conditions, nutrition, importance and life in captivity: *Aquarium, The Zoo, The botanical garden, Insectary!*
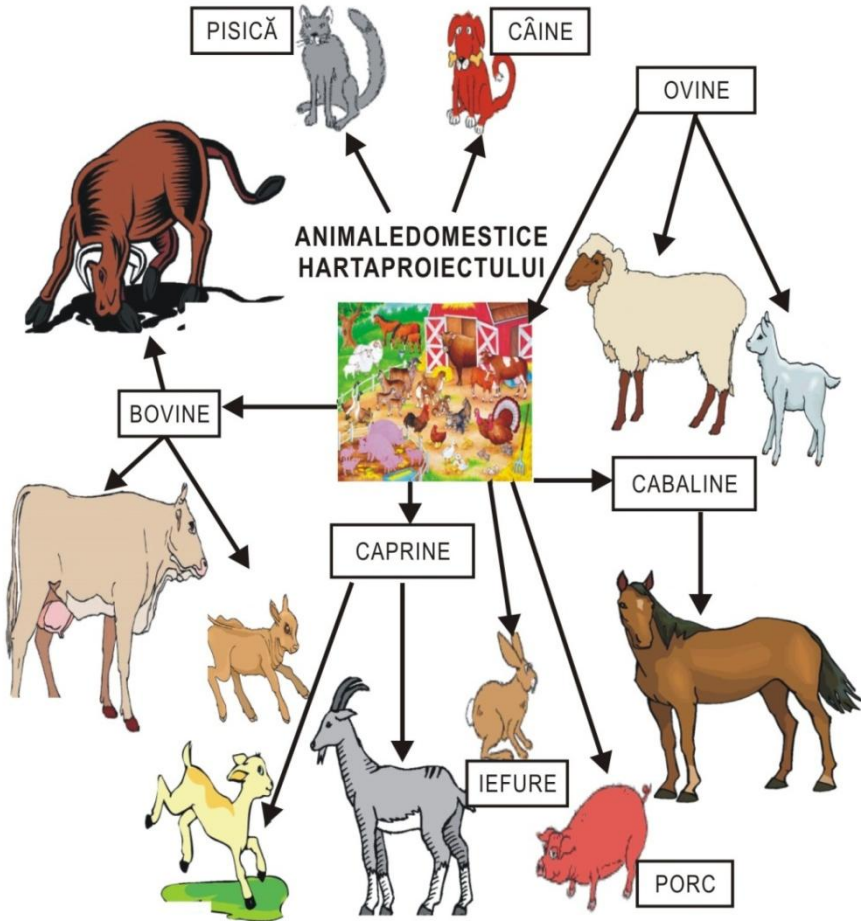
i) The man's activity in nature. Growing and caring for plants and animals, their living conditions: air, light, heat, clean water, nutrition, soil, shelter: *Let's help the bunny! What can we do! The wheel of seasons! Animals and their food! Do you know when? Today, yesterday, tomorrow!*
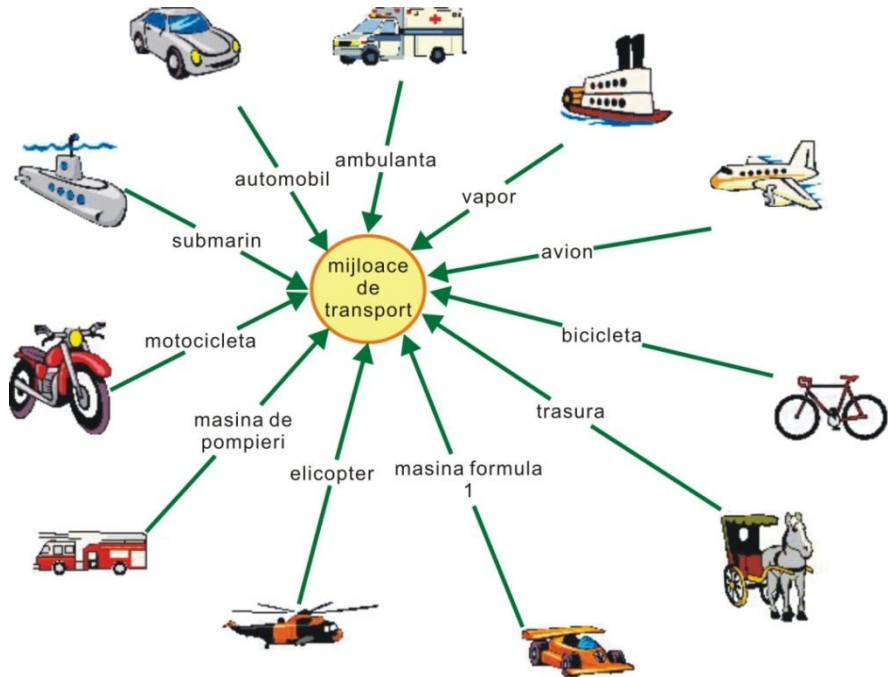
j) Applying measures of environmental protection. The development of moral-affective behaviour towards nature with focus on their ecological culture: *In the park! Little ecologists! What has a little cricket told me!*

7.3 Play in Mathematic Activities

The acquisition of basic mathematic knowledge, as they are stipulated by the syllabus, plays a very important part in childhood education along other types of activity (Ginsberg, H.P., 2006). The specific objectives of mathematic activities can be achieved through didactic and logical games. The following games are useful in the acquisition of mathematic concepts:

- constructive games,
- games for building sets,

- differentiation games,

- pair formation games,

- games of equivalent sets etc.

1. Features of objects and phenomena. Procedures of exploring objects and phenomena: didactic games: *Flower garden, The round dance of small toys! The magic basket! The Florist!*

2. Groups of objects and operations with them: grouping, series, ordering, comparisons according to a criteria: *Place me next to my pair, place me in an ascending series, The tall ones and the dwarfs, Many or few, The florist's basket!*

3. Geometrical figures:

   - small section: Find the square, Let's arrange the discs,

   - middle section: What piece don't we know? What has Martinel done wrong,

   - high section: What is and how is this piece? The colourful painting, The houses on my street,

   - preparatory section: How is and how isn't this piece? The game with circles! Change alike! Build as many as I!

4. Space, movement and space orientation. The place and position of objects in the space: Where has the dwarf stopped? Place the pieced from bottom to the top, Pair the butterflies with the flowers!

5. Time (its passage and irreversibility). The speed of movement (slow, fast, like a flash) and how we perceive the passage of time (like a moment, like an eternity): The magic watch! The changing calendar!

6. The whole and its division into equal parts; its reconstruction from parts: The whole from parts! Let's rebuild the piece, Give Azorel as many bones as plates it's got! Rebuild the shape!

7. Procedures of measuring objects according to parameters: length, width, height, thickness. Standardized and non-standardized units of measurement: Measure and divide into equal parts! Weight and sell! Who is the tallest? Arrange the objects from the narrowest to the widest.

8. Procedures of measuring solid, liquid, flawed bodies. Standardized and non-standardized units of measurement: What is heavier? Measure the height of your mate! Divide juice equally to your friends!

9. The natural sequence of numbers. The notion of number and digit. Numbers within the 1-5 limit. Ordinal and cardinal numbers: Count the leaves from the tree, Count the sparrows on the rod, Which bunny has left? Place the digit in its position!

10. Counting from 1-10. Reinforcement of ordinal and cardinal numbers. Decomposing and composing numbers. Counting from 1-20. Reinforcement of ordinal and cardinal numbers. Decomposing and composing numbers: Place as many dots as indicated by the digit, Count from 1-10, count down, What digit is missing?

11. Mathematic symbols (operations with +, ÷; relation signs =, <, >): Say where it matches? I've made a mistake, correct me, What designates…?

12. Addition of numbers with 1-2 units. Subtraction of numbers with 1-2 units: We calculate, count and learnt mathematics! Solve the problem and you win! Who calculates faster!

13. Solving problems with objects in concrete situations. Easy problems within the limits 1-10, using objects: The dwarf school, We solve and solve and maths we learn! Who's wrong, goes out!

7.4 Play in Musical Education Activities

Music is the voice that mirrors the sincere and non-simulating traits of human soul, said George Enescu. The aim of music is to teach children aesthetics, to develop their abilities to appreciate the beauty of art, the ambiance, nature, social life and it contributes to the creation of beauty through age characteristics. It also makes a significant contribution to the completion of the children's personality.

All musical activities have aesthetic features, but musical plays are very important for children. They acquire sound and rhythm structures, which are intuitive in the beginning but later on, trained in kindergartens during the instructive-educational process.

The objectives of musical activities are:

- Development of the child's ability to express something through music,

- Training the ability to perceive music,

- Knowledge of national and universal values in the field of art,

- Development of creative abilities by cultivating imagination.

Besides singing and listening to music, musical games contribute to improving musical knowledge and abilities, to the development of special inclinations, which will be turned into abilities or even musical talent later on. The more interested the child is in music, the more emotions will he feel in relationship to music. He will develop his musical hearing, rhythm and melody. Musical games have important formative values; learning and practicing them is true "therapy" for the pre-schooler's intellect. Musical games develop different mental processes such as: thinking, memory, attention, affectivity, will, etc.

The pre-schooler has to take various operations into account during musical

games. Altogether they animate the song and the game. The child has to remember the lyrics, follow certain rules, to prove hearing acuity and to be disciplined during the game (attention-willingness-thinking).

Musical education expends its influence also on the child's physical development. The musical games conducted by children develop their respiratory and vocal apparatus and contribute to blood oxygenation. The rhythmic movements become less tiring and give beauty and shape to the body.

Musical games can achieve most objectives regulated by the instructive-educational syllabus for kindergartens due to their special structure.

Musical games mix game elements with music and move on from mere motor execution to an affective state of mind. Music raises the tonus, activates and produces desire for movement. Musical games conducted according to the age of participants are stipulated in the instructive-educational syllabus. Their aim is to develop movement skills based on the lyrics and the rhythm. There are musical games for each section: small, middle and high, and also for the preparatory groups.

Musical games have similar structure to didactic games. They use clear tasks (musical tasks), rules and specific elements for each game: movement, racing/competition, guessing, and surprise.

Musical games are used for the reinforcement of skills and acquisitions of new ones by combining songs with movement. Musical games influence children, contributing to the development of their sense of rhythm and melody. Below, there are some of the musical games used during activities of musical education: *Walk in the rhythm of the music, Sing like me, Sing aloud, sing still, Move in the rhythm of the music, Play, play - don't move, Circle dance.*

We smell the flowers, Sing like me, Musical instruments, Santa's Hat, Big

drums, small drums, "Guess whose voice it is, Come rain come! The fox and the cock, In the forest house, Sleep tight –stand up, The beadle with wings flies to the sun, Fog, fog, A hen with two chicks, Snail, snail; The goat and the kids, The Echo, The Bells, The flower and the sun, The rain and the sun, Look here, this is how we dance, Circle dance, "Dance with circles, dance with ribbons", We dance circle dances, Dance in two, The bear and the fox, Going walking, The Stone bridge, The Joy Dance, We walk merry and dance, Who's more attentive, The Circle dance, "Alunelul-lively Romanian dance", Circle dance with thumping, Ciuleandra, Dance in circle to the right, The snowflakes 'dance etc.

The musical education activities from kindergartens develop the children's taste for beauty and sensitivity.

7.5 Play in Physical Education Activities

The syllabus for instructive-educational activities mentions the following objectives of physical education activities:

- general physical development and increase the resilience of the body,
- training and improvement of basic motor skills and of those with applicative character (development of general motor abilities),
- development of basic motor abilities, Continuous improvement of coordination abilities (neatness),
- development of interest and the habit of daily physical training,
- development of proper individual and collective hygiene habits.

The syllabus mentions also specific objectives for the development ok knowledge and competences, besides the general objectives mentioned above:

1. Knowledge about:

- forms and varieties of walking, running based on conditions at hand,

- mastering the technique of jumping, throwing and catching the ball, climbing and escalading,

- dynamic games, relay races and their practice in various conditions and circumstances,

- team exercises,

- elementary rules of personal and social hygiene, and behaviour rules throughout physical education activities.

2. Competences in:

Motor performance:

- speed running,

- shuttle running,

- general coordination (neatness),

- resistance running,

- long jump,

- distance ball throwing.

3. Attitudes

- interest towards constant practice of physical exercises,

- follow hygiene rules, forms of body conditioning and their positive (beneficial) influence on the body,

- appreciation for fair play behaviours in sport games,

- showing feeling of friendship, esteem, mutual help, initiative in various types of activity (especially in play),

- proper assessment of the other's posture.

Movement games with specific elements for joint activities can be classified *according to the basic motor skills they act on.* Below we list a possible classification:

- walking games,

- running games,

- throwing and catching games,

- jumping games.

According to the motor quality they influence, games used during joint activities can be classifies into:

- games for speed development,

- games for resilience development,

- games for skill development,

- games for strength development,

- games for grace development.

According to the *group of muscles they involve,* games can be divided into:

- games for upper limbs muscles and neck muscles,

- games for the body muscles,

- games for the leg muscles.

Based on the *effort intensity,* the physical education games are divided into:

- games of low intensity,

- games of medium intensity,

- games of high intensity.

Movement games are important activities used for the achievement of objectives set for physical education activities. Their aim is the children's physical development. Play is very important in selected activities but especially in frontal physical education activities. Movement games contribute to the development of a child's personality in this respect, it is necessary to underline that dynamic games (movement games) develop the musculoskeletal apparatus and have positive effects on important body functions, contributing to the improvement of metabolism.

Movement games are complex activities with great implications for the development of general motor ability. They offer the opportunity to develop and train basic motor abilities such as: walking, running, jumping, throwing, catching, climbing, escalating, crawling etc., to develop motor qualities: speed, skills, strength, resilience, coordination abilities, spatial orientation (estimation of directions and spatial sizes) etc.

Through movement games, children have the opportunity to develop motor abilities, thus enriching their motor experience. They contribute to the development of personality traits, of moral traits and of group work. Movement games have to be well prepared by the teacher, well-chosen and based on pre-existing motor abilities, if we aim for good results.

Below, we list the most common movement games used during physical education activities in kindergarten.

Running games: Catch me, Pair running, Catch the mosquito, Long ride, The circle race, The mouse and the cat, The Handkerchief, Chase him away, Relay race, Running after the bunny, Obstacle race.

Jumping games: Don't soak your feet, Who jumped the less? Who jumped

well, became a champion, The bridge, Jump over the pond, The spring race, The frogs' jump, The stork jumps on one leg, Interrupted relay race.

Throwing games: Ball to the leader, Ball in the circle, Up – down, Hit the gates, The best thrower, Ball in the basket, Ball to the target, The carrot in the basket, The winning throwers, Race with throwing, The happy shooters.

Crawling games: Find your house, The chasing cat, Going hunting, Crawl to the toy, Don't cross the line, Be careful, The monkeys.

Climbing games: Carousels, The hunter and the rabbits, The children and the catkin, The wolf and the kids, The chicks from the nest, The busy ants, Reach the flag.

Transportation games: Carry the sachet, White – black, The carp and the pike, The cunning fox, The empty seat, The rabbits, The fishing rod and the fish, The bears and the bees.

Seminar Activities

Tasks and Applications

1. ━

Starting from the following statement: *Childhood games are the buds the man's entire life, because by its development, it reveals the innermost features of his being.*" (F.R. Frobel) write a structured essay of 150 words.

Working time 10 minutes.

2. ━

3. ━

4. ━

Chapter 8

Play in Personal Development Activities–Complementary Activities

8.1 Complementary Activities

Stage III of a daily kindergarten schedule contains complementary activities. Their role is to practice and reinforce in a recreational manner what has been learnt in joint activities. Therefore, play, entertainment games, movement games, sport games, drama, puppet theatre plays, movies, computer games, walks, visits are the predominant activity at this stage.

Play covers much of the time allotted to complementary activities. All activities conducted during a day follow the same topic and the contents approach the objectives set by the syllabus. The games will be therefore selected in such a manner as to comply with these requirements. As the activities from stage II are mostly activities with cognitive and static character, it is mandatory that complementary activities contain movement or entertainment games to compensate for the lack of dynamic action.

The value of these games lies both in the didactic task that they contain, and in the pleasure of playing dynamic, competitive and entertaining games (Jones, E. & Cooper, R., 2006). They create an atmosphere of rivalry and joy, which engages all children in the game. Children experience many emotions and feelings which build teams and create a community. The children's anger is diminished through these games, due to the good mood they create and the relaxing atmosphere.

When time allows it, the kindergarten teacher conducts these activities outdoors, in the yard. If the weather doesn't allow it, they can be conducted in the gym or in a well-ventilated classroom.

Below, there are some entertainment and movement games very appreciated by the children.

8.2 Entertainment Games

Hoodmanblind

Children stand in circle. One child, appointed by the leader, is blindfolded with a scarf and stands in the middle of the circle. The other children spin round and round singing:

- Hoodmanblind,

- Where is your barrow,

- Barrow here, barrow there,

- Go and get it from anywhere.

After they finish singing, children stop moving and the blindfolded one head towards a child, touches him and tries to recognise him. In the end, he has to guess the child's name. If he succeeds, they switch their places, if not, the game goes on with the same child in the middle of the circle.

The Foxes and the Rabbit (Running)

The teacher arranges the children in a circle. They hold hands and two children are selected: one is the fox and the other one is the rabbit. The fox walks in the circle chasing the rabbit that walks outside the circle. All children say at once:

- I'm the reddish fox,

- You'd better watch your fur, rabbit,

- I run after you,

- But you run well, too,

- You fooled me once,

- But you won't fool me twice.

After they say these words, children let the fox out of the circle and she runs after the rabbit until she catches it. Children cheer and clap for the rabbit. The game is played several times, so that each child is the fox or the rabbit, once.

The Mouse and the Cat

Children sit in a circle and the teacher appoints two children, one is the cat and the other one is the mouse. The cat is inside the circle and tries to catch the mouse. She tries to sneak through the children but they don't let her. The game is accompanied by a song with the following lyrics:

- The cat wants to catch,

- A mouse stealing cheese,

- The cat wants to catch,

- A mouse stealing cheese,

- Oh dear, oh dear,

- Poor little mousy,

- Oh dear, oh dear,

- Poor little mousy,

The game repeats several times.

Don't Drop the Egg

One egg is placed in a spoon. The child hold the spoon in one hand and the other one is held at the back. Children leave the starting line taking care not to drop the egg. They can walk as quickly as they can (without dropping the egg) to the next marking (with chalk) and then return. The winners are those who

reach the starting line without dropping the egg.

Where are you, Chimiţă

The children sit in a circle and the teacher names one who goes blindfolded in the middle of the circle. The blindfolded child goes towards the others asking: *Where are you, Chimiţă?* and the children answer: *here, here.* The blindfolded child has to recognise the child toward whom he has walked and say who he is.

8.3 Movement Games

Who Jumps Further (Jumps)

The children are arranged in four rows. The line is marked at 2-3 metres in front of the first row. The one who jumps further from each row goes on one side of the room, the other on the opposite side. After the first row has finished, the other one jumps at the teacher's signal. In the end, the winners, namely those who have jumped the furthest from all rows, build a new row and jump. The winner is the one who jumps the furthest.

The Obstacle Race (Balance)

The game is played in two teams, like a competition. A bench is placed in front of each team, oriented towards their walking direction. A matrass is also placed at the end of the bench, which is used for jumping. The teacher places obstacles on the children's path at a distance of 2 meters. Children climb on the bench and walk balancing their hands in upright position, stretched back and looking straight; then they jump from the bench and walk the path trying to avoid the obstacles.

Pick the Chestnuts! (Skilfulness)

Children are divided in two teams and placed in a queue. On each team's right side, there is a bowl with chestnuts. One child from each team takes a chestnut with a spoon and then takes is to the finish line. If the child drops the chestnut, he has to pick it up with the spoon. When they reach the finish line, they put the chestnut in their team's basket (the baskets have different colours), then run back to their team and hand the spoon to the next teammate. The team who takes all the chestnuts to the basket first are the winners.

The Chipmunks and the Hunter (Climbing)

The teacher draws a circle; the hunter sits in the circle and the other children (the chipmunks) pick walnuts around him. When the teacher claps her hands, the hunter starts hunting chipmunks. The children run away from the hunter, climbing on the espaliers. The chipmunk which is caught by the hunter leaves the game and sits on the bench patiently. The game is played several times.

Seminar Activities

Tasks and Applications

1. ▬

Starting from the following statement: write a structured essay of 150 words.

Working time 10 minutes.

2. ▬

To what extent does playing fulfil the individual's necessity in the involvement of his own "creation".

Chapter 9

Using Play in Schools

Once the child goes to school in the 1st grade, the play, a fundamental activity in kindergarten, is substituted by organized and systematic activity, i.e. learning. Learning activities are activities which subject the pupil to heavier activities, to rules, which they are not yet accustomed to. If the shift from the relaxing and flexible kindergarten activities to the rigid school activity is too sudden and tactless, the child can regard it as a very stressful situation. Very serious issues, such as integration problems or even learning difficulties can emerge due to this situation. The new school environment is completely different for the young pupils. Modern pedagogy and education specialists emphasize the importance of modern teaching methods, which rely on play. Play is not in opposition or contradiction with school activity. Therefore, teachers should insert play in school activities, during the lessons when they notice that the pupils are tired, bored or inattentive. Their role is to cheer up the atmosphere, to revive the lesson and to smooth the shift from kindergarten to school activities.

There are many barriers, though, which hinder the teacher from using play in instructive-educational activities. The impediments are of: attitude, structural and functional nature. In terms of attitude, the barriers are determined by the teacher's tendency to fit in some sort of scholastic orientation, which demands meeting the syllabus requirement in a certain amount of time. Therefore play doesn't fit in this type of approaches, only maybe at the end of the lesson.

Structural barriers are determined by limitations referring to: curricula, teaching timing, teaching premises and teaching materials. Play requires proper playground, time for conducting it and also certain materials. Functional barriers are similar to attitude barriers and they emerge from the teacher1s desire to approach the school subjects as stipulated by the syllabus. Teachers are more interested in completing their task as required by the syllabus than in the manner they do it and in the way they could integrate play in the curriculum.

Despite these barriers, passionate teachers, who know child psychology, find the resources and the manner of implementing play in school activities. It has become obvious that drama can be used as manner of teaching children aspects about the social life, about the understanding of different events and also for solving conflict situations.

It is a matter of teacher's ability and giftedness to introduce elements of play in the teaching activity, when the pace of lesson demands it. Play is a procedure which can be used without restraints by the teachers who know the features of young pupils. Especially in the 1st grade, teachers should use didactic games, drama or other games-exercises to diminish the scholastic character of lessons. Play introduces a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom, they engage all pupils in activities and their learning capacity is much higher.

9.1 Examples of Games for Pupils

The Scorpion

- Number of participants: 10-30,

- Materials: scarf,

- Duration: 5-10 minutes.

Procedure: The players stand in a circle. They hold each other's shoulders. Another player stands in the middle. He is the scorpion. His ankle is very well tight up with a scarf. He walks on his hands and feet and has to touch someone from the circle with his scarf. The circle can move in all kinds and directions, but cannot break off. The one touched by the scorpion is the new scorpion.

The Magic Stone

- Number of participants: 8-25,

- Materials: stone or button,

- Duration: 10-15 minutes.

Procedure: All players outstretch their arms and palms and stand in a circle. A player goes into the circle and pretends to give each player a stone. They all clench immediately their palms. In reality, only one player gets the stone. After all players have been touched, the player who has received the stone runs quickly to a pre-set place. The others have to catch him before reaching that place. Who catches him, is the nest one to give the stone. If no one catches him, the runner leaves the stone on the ground.

9.2 Little Birdie, Move your Nest

- Number of participants: 8-25,

- Duration: 10-15 minutes.

Procedure: Children stand two by two, one in front of the other, holding hands. Thus, they build a nest. In each nest, there is a player (the bird). One player is without a "nest". He has to walk until the leader (a pupil or the teacher) says: "Little birdie, move your nest!" The birds have to switch their nests quickly. Then the player without a nest tries to find a free one. Who is left without a nest, continues searching!

Seminar Activities

Tasks and Applications

1. ▬

Starting from the following statement: *"Let the child see, hear, discover, fall, arise, be mistaken. Don't use words when action and facts are possible."(Pestalozzi*), write a structured essay of 150 words.

Working time 10 minutes.

2. ▬

Design a didactic project for a learning activity in primary school where to integrate a didactic game.

Chapter 10

Play and Toys

10.1 The Role of Toys in the Child's Life

Toys are as important as play in a child's life. Toys help in the development process of a child's multilateral personality. Along with play, toys stimulate thinking, speaking, imitation, memory and enrich vocabulary, fantasy and the child's emotional abilities. The child's attention and skilfulness is developed when handling toys during a play. During collective plays, children learn to adapt to their playmates, to diminish their egocentrism and to share their toys with the other playmates. Group play shapes the children's behaviour, enriches their knowledge and develops their ability to solve conflict situations. The older the child is, the more he needs playmates and various toys, because the play is more evolved than in early childhood years.

Some psychologists consider toy as important in a child's life as the book is for adults.

We could say that toys are essential in a child's life. If children don't have toys to play with, they make up one. We see children quite often playing with sticks or stones which serve as replacement for toys. The child uses the toys as a partner in the game he is playing and he just assigns it life. The toys are in an animated being in the child's fantastic world life. The toy is not a random object, it has a value in the child's hand, sometimes it is an imaginary friend or an enemy. The toy has an important role in the development of the child's imagination and fantasy. It stimulates the child's creative abilities, lights up his fantasy, generate new desires, preferences, feelings, emotions and interests. The toys bring about deep changes in the child's life by the transformations and animations it is assigned through play: the toy develops the child's needs, desires, feelings, self-awareness.

If the toys are properly chosen, they stimulate the analytic-synthetic activity

in many and various layers of reflecting reality: sensory, perceptive, imaginative and notional.

On the sensory-perceptive level, the child analyses and synthesizes the play object very carefully. Sometimes, children even break their toys; they dismember them in their desire of seeing beyond the whole. Their gestures shouldn't, therefore be regarded as a destructive one. The gesture signals their curiosity, a need for investigation. Children feel the need to "dismember" toys, to see how they are made and what they are made of, to see what "hides" inside them because toys are a direct link between objects and beings from their universe.

The child behaves with his toys on the imaginary level as if they were real life objects; children even assign them social functions. The blending of fictional with real life objects is possible through toys.

They are used in the child's accession to knowledge and they mediate the child's acquisition of social experiences. The toys used during playing develop the child's thinking. The substitution of reality by toys involves all mental processes. We have noticed that toys acquire more subtle meanings as the children grow up, due to the evolution of their thinking. Thinking is practiced because children assign different significances to their toys while playing. These representations are the consequence of their interaction with real-world objects. The child substitutes the immediate, concrete, perceptive field and learns how to operate with the meaning of words with different degrees of generalization.

The toy and the play help in the transfer process from "outside" to "inside". The process is an important stage in the development of thinking at young pre-schoolers. Toys and play have a fundamental importance in the development of personality and adults have to consider them as the child's main playmate.

10.2 The Qualities of Toys

Toys have to meet certain quality requirements in order to be appropriate for the educational demands and develop the children's personality:

- to comply with the formative and stimulation role,

- to determine the acquisition of knowledge, the development of skills and abilities,

- to stimulate the child's imagination and fantasy,

- to develop the child's aesthetic sense,

- to comply with hygiene-sanitary requirements so as not to encroach on the child's safety and health,

- not to contradict moral values.

Toys should be carefully chosen, taking into account the child's age, preferences and intellectual abilities. We should search for high quality toys and toys made for children. These have positive effects and educational values. Usually, toys and plays contain instructions for use, the age they are appropriate for and their role in the child's education. Toys should be carefully selected according to the age of the players, so that they don't injure them in any way.

The toy should be appropriate for the age and individual features of the players. It should have porter dimensions, weight; it should be dynamic and resistant. Toys should make a contribution to the development of children's artistic spirit, the sense of beauty and also be a reflection of reality. The closer they are to reality, the better are the representations of surrounding world.

Toys along with play should contribute to the child's mental, conceptual and social development.

10.3 Classification of Toys

We can classify toys according to the children's ages:

- toys for the ages 3- 4,

- toys for the ages 4-5,

- toys for the ages 6-7 etc.

Another classification is made according to their usage:

1. psychomotor toys:

- construction toys,

- sport toys,

- intellectual toys,

- speech development toys,

- science toys,

- creativity stimulation toys,

- logical-mathematic toys,

- musical toys.

2. social toys:

- competition toys,

- role play toys,

- cooperation toys.

Toys can be classified in the following manner:

- simple toys: cuddle toys, dolls, cars,

- compound toys: construction toys, fretwork, kits,

- rule toys: society toys, domino, chess, monopoly etc.

It is very important that pre-schoolers are taught how to play with different toys, with other children and also to develop their skills in caring for the toys. Parents should chose toys according to the children age because most toys have age specification on the box. If play is important in a child's life, so are the toys. They stimulate children in performing different actions, influence the game's content, determine emotions, interest, develop skills, activate imagination and creativity. Toys are teaching materials used in the educational stimulation of children. They have multidisciplinary characteristics; a toy can be successfully used in all kindergarten activities. Its flexibility assigns it multiple values. It also brings about socialization. When a child, who is ignored by the group, brings a new and interesting toy, the other children, guided by their innate curiosity, will rush to him and study the toy. Thus, the child will be accepted by the others and new collaboration relationships, maybe even friendships will be developed.

A high quality and colourful toy, which complies with teaching regulations always has an impact on the children's aesthetic sense.

Affective relationships usually develop between children and their toys. Each child has a favourite toy, especially at very young ages. They are inseparable even if the toy is already damaged. The favourite toy is part of the child's intimacy, is mental balance and affective substitute.

10.4 Books for Children

It is mandatory that all children have access to literature for children. These books contain various information which stimulate the children's imagination,

develop their speaking skills, their pleasure of listening to stories. Books for pre-schoolers are mostly visual books, they focus on pictures. Children can "read" these pictures and share them with other children; they retell the pictures and thus interact and socialize with the others. Children can also retell stories that are familiar to them, based on images and pictures. They develop their speaking skills, make appeal to representations to identify objects and phenomena from the surrounding environment, they can decode the letters of the alphabet and calculate based on the images. Books like: My first encyclopaedia, My first dictionary, Human body, Wild and domestic animals, Underwater world, Jungle book, Stick and learn, Insects and birds, Invisible world, Fairy tales and stories, The illustrated technical encyclopaedia are just some of the most valuable book that shouldn't miss from each child's library. Colouring book are also very useful to children for learning colours, developing skills in drawing and being familiar with colours and drawings.

Puzzle books are highly educational; children gave to rebuild the story from pictures, or to rebuild an object from its parts. These books develop the children's reproductive memory, skilfulness and thinking.

10.5 Games and Toys

Children should be allowed to play and to have their playground if we want them to develop harmoniously, healthy and according to their abilities. A child plays with anything that awakes his interest and imagination. Toy can be considered any object which activates the child's thinking, creativity, imagination, abilities, skills, memory and observation as well as anything that makes him pleasure and engages him in pleasant activities. A carton box, a stick, mud, a sheet of paper, a piece of cloth, they can all be toys in a child's hands. Toys should be used alternatively; otherwise children get bored with them. Toys which copy adults' objects, such as: toy medical kit, mini-kitchen, phones, etc.,

stimulate the child's imagination and develop their socializing skills.

Teachers can identify the children's preferences, special talent, skills and abilities if they follow closely the toys they like playing with.

Seminar Activities

Tasks and Applications

1. ▬

Starting from the following statement: *"The child is not a pot to be filled but a fireplace to be lighted up. A well trained mind is worth more than a well-filled mind" -Montaigne*), write a structured essay of 150 words.

Working time 10 minutes.

2. ▬

Show how games can make a contribution to developing self-confidence in pre-schoolers.

3. ▬

Which are the main functions of games?

4. ▬

Plan a didactic project for a game based learning activity.

5. ▬

Give examples of toys that can be used as didactic material for each domain of knowledge.

6. ▬

Show the functions of toys and what characteristics should they have to meet educational standards.

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