

PLAY – THE MAIN FORM OF ACTIVITY IN KINDERGARTEN

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Abstract

According to the Romanian encyclopedic dictionary, the notions of “play” and “to play” have multiple meanings. Hence, the word “play” may refer to amusement, but it can also be a figure of speech, i.e. “play with fire”, “play with nature” or “play with destiny”.

The verb “to play” is used to describe amusement, relaxation or even the act of performing a part in a play; as a figure of speech it can be used with the meaning of deceit (play-acting) or stirring action (play with one’s nerves), it can refer to occupying a certain hierarchical position (play a leading role) or to imply a risk (play with one’s life), a shallow, reckless attitude towards something (play with fire) and last but not least it can express vivid and shiny pictures (the playful sun mirroring the water).

Although, explanatory dictionaries sort out the distinctions between the primary (main) meaning and figurative meanings of these words, the difference in meaning is not clear enough. Why, for instance, do we use a figurative meaning in the expression “play a role” and a basic one in the expression “play cards”?!

It is not hard to establish what types of activities and their particularities have merged into the essential meaning of those respective words and how that meaning has enriched itself with new and new significances.

Keywords: didactic play; learning through play; play types; instructive aspects of play in kindergarten.

1. Introduction

Play provides the child with the opportunity to feel like a *leading actor*; *feeling in the center of one’s actions develops self-confidence and adjusts behaviour*. The adult suggests relationships, materials and information in order to facilitate the child’s playful activity, making it more complex and useful in the process of character-building. A chance for individual experiences, the child’s playful activity combines communication with the progressive development of autonomy (Maciuc, 2009).

For J. Dewey, play or the act of playing are synonymous with the child’s mental attitude, both in terms of unity and structure. “Free play and interaction, with the intervention of influential factors, thoughts and physical movements of the child, are, in J. Dewey’s opinion, the elements that make the child’s images and interests fall into place in a very satisfying way. Expressed in an appositive manner, it

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translates the fact that the supreme goal of a child is full development – that is to say, fulfilling one’s incipient potential, which will take him from one level to another” (Dewey, 1977, p. 147).

An essential, specific and dominant activity for a pre-school child, play can be regarded as a “complete” way of education with numerous valences. Famous psychologists, notably J. Piaget and E. Claparede, state the importance of play in the life of a child, as well as its decisive role in forming and developing his/her personality. The child’s whole psychological life is let out through play.

Play stimulates the intensity of living life to the full, of living passionately each moment, organizing tension that is specific to fulfilled actions and assuming the big and complex role of the “school of life” (Șchiopu, 1981).

Play is a “global behaviour, a willing and pleasant action that opens up all possibilities for a child’s natural tendencies, determining his/her to interact with others, to react to the need for movement and risk, to face danger, to cope with his need for networking, to set free one’s imagination and to comply with rules” (Ionescu, 2000, p. 156, our translation).

In E. Claparede’s view, the child’s self-development can be achieved through *imitation* and *play*. Playing is, in fact, the first form of activity for a child and becomes a part of his/her life from his/her very birth.

2. Theories about play

The matter of play has been over time to the forefront of different experts' attention: psychologists, pedagogists, sociologists, anthropologists and philosophers, who have admitted and emphasized the instructive characteristics of the playful activity from varied and sometimes contradictory perspectives. Starting from the 19th century, a series of explanatory theories were outlined, regarding the nature and functions of play, which despite their limited value in terms of the implications of the playful activity at the instructive level, offered valuable conclusions for understanding the emergence and essence of play. Further, we shall run down a list with a few of the most important theories (in Glava, Glava, 2002; Maciuc, 2009):

- Relaxation theory (rest) – authors: Schaller (1861), Lazarus (1883);
- surplus energy theory, first defended by Schiller and then by Spencer;
- atavism theory: “child development is a brief recapitulation of the evolution of the human species” (Haeckel, Stanley Hali);
- pre-exercise theory: Karl Groos, 1896 “there are almost as many types of games as instincts – fighting games, hunting games, competing games, erotic games, etc.”;
- play as a stimulant to growth (H. Carr);
- complementary exercise theory (theory of compensation), and with Konrad Lange – ego expanding theory: play has the role to arouse numb tendencies, and by replacing reality play gives a chance to everyone’s individuality to manifest itself;
- cathartic, purifying theory.

These theories are accompanied by theories such as the cognitive theory (Brian Sutton-Smith), Ellis (Arousal Modulation Theory) and the metacommunicative theory (Metacommunicative Theory) (Bateson, Garvey).

Looking at their overall contribution, they can be grouped into two categories of play interpretations: biologizing and psycho-sociological. In what follows, we shall dwell on a few of these theories (Glava, Glava, 2002):

Hence, Karl Gross biologizes the social essence of play, showing that the latter is a pre-exercise for the adult's life, by exercising native tendencies in order to mature. The above-mentioned author doesn't succeed in identifying the presence of feelings or fiction in children's play. Although limited, Gross' pre-exercise theory for life sustains something to be kept in mind, that is, the evolution of play behaviour and of the complexity of play with regard to beings on a higher phylogenetic level. Gross' theory is complemented by H. Carr's conception, which formulates the hypothesis according to which play does not refer to achieving perfection of instincts, but on the contrary, it is a post-exercise in the sense that it helps supporting already existing instincts. The two conceptions converge into a mutual idea according to which the tendency towards play is hereditary. The hypothesis of the exercise that supports tendencies and instincts is called *the theory of complementary exercise or of compensation*.

H. Carr enriches the analysis of play with one more aspect: play has a special role of purification of the human being, purifying it from a series of long-lasting instinctual tendencies which might be considered antisocial and in contravention of the contemporary lifestyle (ex.: belligerent tendencies, hunting instinct). Play does not kill off these *impulses*, but it drives personality into an area that protects it from these impulses' oppression. It is about the *cathartic theory of play* and according to some studies, *the atavism theory*. Being an adept of the *repetition theory*, Stanley Hali shares the ideas of the above-mentioned theory, drawing on Haeckel's famous idea according to which ontogenesis is a repetition of phylogenesis, and he formulates his conception of the playful activity considering it an inertial repetition of some of the most primitive manifestations of life (Barbu, Mateiaș, Rafailă, Popescu, Șerban 1997).

The merit of the biological theories is that they have imposed the bio-physiological determinations in the analysis of play (Șchiopu, 1970). But the nature of play cannot be revealed only through aspects of the biological causalities.

Psycho-sociological theories have made important contributions to broadening the playful phenomenon and they have a significant importance also in adjusting the activity of play to the demands of the educational processes.

In this *category* we find the oldest explanatory theory of play, whose essence persists in the common mentality: the *relaxation theory* of R. S. Lazarus. Play is opposed to work as a consequence of its recreational functions. Taken over by other authors, this conception has been reconsidered in that play must be regarded as a *way of active rest*, a modality to re-create the energy of the organism.

The *surplus energy theory* falls within the same scope, being related from a certain point of view to the cathartic theory formulated by Fr. Schiller and shared in

by Herbert Spencer. According to this theory play is a simple way of spending the energy surplus. Just like the prior conception, the surplus energy theory exaggerates certain valences of play, failing to fully explain the playful conduct of children even when they are tired or ill. A similar theory is the one of Ch. Buhler, *the theory of functional pleasure* that the child feels during play and which is a drive for the latter. But not even this theory can be applied to any scenario in order to explain all play situations, since we all know that some games are repeated by children even though they cause troubles.

Of greater interest for educators can be the theories that from one perspective or another, they see play as a way to develop both physically and psychologically and to know reality. Hence, in Ed. Claparede's conception, the main function of play is to allow the individual to fulfill his/her inner self and express his/her personality in a framework that allows his/her to do that. He also acknowledges the functions of entertainment, relaxation, social agent and transmitter of ideas and customs from one generation to another. In his turn, A. Gesell sees play as a way of socializing and cultural transmission, while J. Chateau points out that during play possibilities occur which materialize successively as play is a preparation for work.

As far as the analysis of implications carried by the activity of play is concerned, A.N. Leontiev made consistent contributions, seeing play as an activity for expressing psychological life at pre-school age but also for exercising and developing the overall personality. In his opinion, the origins of play reside in the gap between the demands of the external environment and the child's possibilities to cope with those demands, a gap which can be closed through the playful activity in which the child's need for action on the reality is intertwined with the formation and development of action procedures.

In this respect, the famous psychologist L. S. Vigotski states that play is instructive in the true meaning of the word only when formulated demands (through rules, tasks or subject) exceed just by little the child's possibilities given by his level of development. Aiming at "the proximate development" makes play tasks be a stimulus to the child's psycho-physical development.

Of capital importance is also J. Piaget's conception on the playful activity. Preoccupied in his studies with highlighting the mechanisms for the emergence and development of intelligence, Piaget notices the special role that play has in the child's development. Play is defined by the Swiss psychologist as a "functional exercise" with the role of "expanding the environment", a way to transform reality through assimilation and to adjust to the real world, therefore a way of adaptation. In the evolution of play, Piaget distinguishes between three big categories: play as an exercise, symbolic play, and the rule-based play. The exercise play dominates early ages but it tends to appear even at later stages. This type of play is associated with sensory and motor development with a role in developing both motility and mind as well as in embedding the real world. In this respect, a subcategory of exercises aim at the practice of thinking (puns, verbal communication). Piaget acknowledges that the symbolic play has great importance for the development of language and imagination, but especially for the assimilation of reality through a

process of representation and significance in accordance with the real world. The rule-based play fulfills an important function in terms of progressive social integration of the child, by embedding social norms of relationships, imposed by the game's rules. Piaget's conception of play and its characteristics in pre-school period is even today largely evoked in the analyses on the playful phenomenon.

Although some of the theories previously described are unilateral and regard play from a narrow, limited perspective, they nevertheless demonstrate the complexity of the playful phenomenon which has multiple implications in the development process of individuals at different stages of growth.

3. The functions of play

A dominant activity at pre-school age, play fulfills a few essential functions (Stan, 2000):

a) The adaptable function, consists of assimilating both the physical and social reality as well as of adjusting the inner self to reality. When playing, the child transposes impressions acquired from the external, physical and social environment, hence managing to absorb reality and adapt to its demands at a primary level. Throughout the age of middle childhood, one can notice an increase in the child's capacity to transpose into play, rapidly and coherently, different elements of reality - roles, conduct, attitudes, objects - and to consider and reflect in a thorough way upon more complex aspects of the external environment, that can be found also in different playful contexts (games with plots and roles). If, at the beginning of the pre-school age living reality through play is done completely, in the sense that the child doesn't distinguish between the real situation and the imaginary one, as s/he grows aware of his/her own person and the model s/he embraces, a clear cut emerges between the two dimensions, i.e. the one of the reality and the one of fiction, but this doesn't mean that the involvement in the game with real impressions is more superficial. On the contrary, by playing, the child experiments roles that overlap with his/her own self and therefore s/he exercises himself/herself as an active agent and not just like a reaction to the environment, and consequently, this fact will gradually provide his/her with the adjustment and understanding of the real world as well as with the premises necessary for the smooth transition from childhood to adolescence and maturity.

This function of play is largely recognized. Hence, Freud and his collaborators consider that by repeating real experiences at the level of play is a real way to get a hold of painful events; Erikson sees play as a method through which children organize and integrate life experiences, while Piaget and the representatives of his school show that play is the children's essential mean to get a hold of reality.

b) The instructive function. Play is a drive for the cognitive, emotional and psychomotor development as well as for shaping personality.

The empirical knowledge ensured through play implies the involvement of perceptive capacities, reaction capabilities, reasoning skills as well as communication possibilities which are practiced and enriched both qualitatively and quantitatively. Faced with real problems that play involves, children have the

opportunity to practice their capacity to analyze problem-solving skills and to apply the best solutions so that play may go on.

Playing again or continuing games, mastering rules or conventions as well as making decisions regarding the course, finality of play as well as the necessary resources and their symbolizing possibilities, all this requires memorization and creativity skills on the part of the child. Play stimulates fantasy, reproductive and creative imagination, and it is a way for developing flexibility and spontaneity. Through imaginary episodes initiated during play, children are capable to face situations which in real life cause them fear, and to find resources to overcome those fears. Play determines the child to relate to objects and the partners of play and sometimes this relationship has a competitive character. Being confronted with himself and the others stimulates and shapes emotional and behavioural processes, that is to say, it enriches the range of emotional experiences and equips the child with the capacity to control emotions in relation to reality.

c) *The informative function.* Through play, the child acquires information, notions and concepts necessary to understand and integrate the real world. By investigating diverse physical realities, the child manipulates, chooses, puts in order, classifies, measures and gets familiar with the particularities of different things. Also, s/he gains knowledge about weight, harshness, height, volume, texture, categories of objects or the laws of the physical world. In reflecting the social reality, s/he plays different statuses, roles, specific languages and rules, whose systematic and out-of-the-context learning would be mainly impossible at this age.

d) *The socialization function is defined by practicing through play and assimilating at the level of behaviour the exigencies of social life. The majority of games* and especially the ones that involve cooperation, competition or role, are based on interaction, adjustment of own actions to those of the partner of play, assuming responsibility of their own behavior and complying with behavioural conventions imposed by the situation. The capacity of children to perform in the activity of play evolves naturally as the child grows and develops, but throughout the pre-school age the adult plays an essential role in assisting the social development through play. Yet, the child learns social and behavioural correction not just from adults but even from playmates who find themselves in the same situation.

Play offers the child many chances to explore concepts such as freedom in playful activities. Children have the opportunity to experiment implications that personal freedom has in the sphere of responsibility.

An important aspect of socialization through play is the child's tendency to defend and assert his/her individuality along with the need to integrate socially. Obligated by the playful context to have a split personality and interpret different roles, the pre-school child ends up building a sense of his own identity and accumulate elements of his self-image and s/he manages to do so due to the occasions offered by play and self-analysis in different situations.

e) *The revealing psychic function.* The child puts into play life experiences, feelings, unfulfilled intentions, impressions, fears, thoughts, attitudes, inner or interrelational conflicts. Hence, they are accessible to both parents and the educator,

who notice the child playing, the way in which s/he chooses the topic, the material resources, the partners or even how seriously s/he takes roles and their content, and therefore they have the chance to observe both incipient reactions of the child's interests and skills as well as the level of psycho-physical development and any disorders or malfunctions during the development of his/her personality. Play is an excellent generator of self-awareness with regard to own capacities and self-confidence building.

4. Types of play

The studies of psycho-pedagogy of play include many attempts regarding the integration of playful activities within categories of synthesis as the specialists' preoccupation for classifying the types of play has been constant, irrespective of the theoretical perspective of each of them in the analysis of the play phenomenon. The different classifications described by mainstream literature are differentiated by the corresponding study, either longitudinal or transversal, and by the classification criterion used. In this respect, there are known classifications based on elements such as the instructive role of play, the complexity character, the necessary skills or the number of partners involved.

Some authors (Maciuc, 2009) have set up the following categories:

- Games with plot and roles, at first imitation games and then creation games;
- Games with plots and roles in fairy tales and stories: dramatized games;
- Construction games, from the simple manipulation of construction materials to cube constructions or Lego constructions;
- Athletic games; rule-based games;
- Funny games;
- Didactical games.

At kindergarten they organize:

- **symbolic games: games based on topics from** everyday life, construction games, games based on plots from fairy tales and stories, drama games;
- **movement games: symbolic motive games**, sports games and fun games;
- **road traffic games;**
- **sensory games: games for the development of tactile and kinesthetic sensitivity, games for the development of visual sensitivity, games for the development of audible sensitivity, games for the development of the gustative-olfactory sensitivity;**
- **intellectual games: games for stimulating** oral communication, games for practising correct pronunciation, attention games and spatial orientation games, analysis games and mental synthesis games, mental comparison games, games of abstraction and generalization, games for the development of insight, games for the development of imagination; other types of games: games for the development of inhibitive processes and self-control, logical and mathematical games, games for knowing the environment, games of movement with text and songs, games for assimilating moral behaviour;
- **playful activities:** e.g. "Small gardeners", "On duty squad in action", etc.

If we consider as criterion for classifying the forms of play, the extent to which the adult can intervene in organizing and intensifying the educational influence of play, we can distinguish between **spontaneous games**, initiated by children and **didactic games** (Mateias, 2003).

A subcategory of spontaneous games are the ones in which the directed intention is totally missing. Another subcategory includes games that, in broad terms and over a relatively long period of time, the educator senses that they are possible and necessary for the children s/he works with and for whom s/he prepares materials and contents.

As for spontaneous games, the classification according to the evolutionary criterion made by Piaget is extremely important, and in this respect the fundamental types of play are the following: **practice game, symbolic game, rule-based game and the construction game.**

The practice game or the functional game is a constant presence in the children's activity. For each new acquisition the child makes, there is a period of time in which s/he practises that thing just for the pleasure of doing it as best possible without integrating it in another activity. S/he practices the movement by jumping as much as possible in one foot, throws objects as far as possible, transports heavy objects, turns upside down small objects to see what happens and how they move, fills and empties recipients or uses modelling clay.

The practice game is carried out also at intellectual level: the child plays by mixing up syllables and building meaningless words, makes up an answer or story intentionally untrue just for fun, s/he puts effort into making up an endless row of questions or considerations on a certain topic. Practice games, like any other type of game, are indispensable. For this reason, they must be regarded as useful and admired or at least accepted, not prohibited. If properly educated, the pre-school child, even "supervised", distinguishes between toys and the objects used for other purposes.

The symbolic play, known in the pedagogical literature under the name of **game of creation**, is the play through which the child describes an aspect of reality through gestures, words, objects or even toys. The description will be more or less real depending on the child's representations and the material means s/he has at his/her disposal. For instance: he may pick up the phone and simulate that he's speaking on the phone; he may take another object, for instance a box that symbolizes the receiver or he may simulate that he puts the receiver to his ear to talk; his own body can imitate the gestures of another person, animal, bridge or anything else.

The content of the symbolic play can be very diverse. The emphasis is more on what is more important for the child. The members of the family with their activities and relations are the ones most often described in children's activity of play. The relations between educators and children are also privileged through play. The frustrating situations for the child, his/her mistakes, the prohibitions s/he hardly accepts, the situations of fear as well as special joys, are also reflected in play. By playing, displeasures can be more easily avoided. For instance, the child can escape the fear towards a dog through a game in which s/he explains to a doll that she must not be afraid.

At the beginning, the symbolic play takes place either through the repetition of own activities in the context of game, in no connection to reality, or by giving life to objects and toys. Therefore, the doll shall eat and shall be taken for a stroll. The movement of a small car and that of a ball rolling down give the impression of animism, of spectacular powers in connection with both the possibilities of the toy as well as own possibilities of intervention.

The level of complexity and the length of symbolic games are very variable. They can be played again in different forms from the point of view of details, but significant progress of content is visible only after approximately one year.

From representing simple activities, attitudes, striking expressions or ways of handling objects, the child will go to **role-based games**. The role in a game is an attempt to reproduce an interesting image of a character through actions similar to his/hers, such as attitudes, verbal expressions or use of tools and instruments specific to his activity. The pre-school child is capable of such a representation. If she puts a long muffler on her head in order to personify the educator's long hair and a hat on top, a little girl can consider herself an educator and therefore she is justified to educate her teddy bear.

The symbolic game with roles can be played either by a child in a lead and his toys with passive roles or by the alternation of several roles by the same child. Subsequently, approximately around the age of 4 to 6, the symbolic game reaches its climax through the game with more roles, each of them interpreted by either a child or by toys distributed in episodic roles. Roles can now be coordinated due to the emergence of collective symbolism. The preoccupation for the adequate external reception leads children to adopt conventions, symbols for actions, objects and suggestion for acceptability norms. The pre-school children's plans are not complete for the entire action, nor are they detailed. They leave a lot of room for improvising and change.

The sources for themes and roles around which the plot is woven are the surrounding reality and the fictional environment of stories. The games with plots from the real world reflect through content both the direct experiences lived by the child but also the ones acquired through observation or narration. The games with plots from stories are more pretentious as they involve quite often the creation of a special atmosphere or the outline of some characters' particularities that children are not familiar with (wolf, witch). Therefore, these games impose the creative reproduction of artistic images and of characters' story.

The games inspired by the text of stories can take the shape of some games and dramatizations in which the roles are either interpreted by children or by theatre puppets. Organizing a puppets theatre allows the child to detach himself from a certain role and assume responsibility as organizer and stage director.

The creation game undergoes evolution and enrichment from one year to another. If at the beginning of the pre-school age the child expresses isolated actions, assumes roles without giving them a social significance or internal motivation, then the child will gradually move on to games with roles that imply the expression of more complex aspects in relation to the characteristics of interpreted characters

(similar actions, attitudes, verbal and nonverbal expressing, use of specific instruments, etc.) and which are integrated into activities that involve interaction and cooperation and which converge towards a pre-established finality.

Throughout the creation games, the child's behaviour regarding the conscious and unconscious symbolizing of reality is largely illustrated. The creation game establishes a specific relation between the child and reality, which s/he imitates mechanically.

Dramatizations are based on the text of a narration or story whose content is so impressive for the child that he wants to live it emotionally and cognitively. They are occasions to organize ideas, feelings, actions, characters, worlds and societies more or less imaginary and to communicate through them attitudes and convictions.

A very well-known text is acted out and it is already largely memorized by the children because they have asked to listen to it repeatedly. During the staging of the text proper, the child who learns a part borrows motivation, ideas and means of interpretation from the teacher and the other children, individually discovering other perspectives. The staging may be done using puppets or shadow puppetry.

Rule-based games have two essential characteristics: the existence of at least one rule and the competitive spirit. Rules are conventions amongst people with regard to the way in which actions should be carried out or things valued. This kind of game may be copied from other kids, usually older ones, or it may be invented by the participants who make their own rules as they go. This occurs after the age of 4; however, it is fully developed after the age of 7. Kindergarten children may take part in movement-based games or intellectual ones. They are very keen on the movement-based games. Their abilities to establish rules are rather reduced. That is why original games with a set of rules are relatively few in number. Rule-based games are therefore the norm in kindergartens. Young children may even play some of these games on their own.

Movement-based games

This type of game corresponds to the specific dynamics of childhood and it largely satisfies kindergarten children's need for movement. Generally, these games are based on observing a set of pre-established rules and the enacting of certain specific movements. As opposed to the previous age stage, during the kindergarten period, these movements are contextualized into movement games that mirror episodes in real life, more often than not the imitation of movements, attitudes and relationships in people and animals' lives. (e.g. "The Wolf and the Sheep", "The Thieves and the Policemen", "The Ducks and the Huntsmen") – movement games centred on a topic. The contextualization of movements takes place in text and song games, in which children get organized in circles and the existence of the text and the song ensure a more expressive interpretation of the written part and at the same time a correct performance of the movements. (e.g. finger games) Games that have no particular topic are part of the same category of movement games. Their main purpose is to help children practise physical skills and abilities. On most occasions these games are endowed with a competitive character, taking the form of races.

Irrespective of their secondary characteristics, all movement games play an important formative role in the psycho-physical development of kindergarten children. By imposing certain movement rules, these games contribute to the enhancement of accuracy and of a better coordination of generic or precision movements. By integrating formative valences in the intellectual scheme of games, which means the re-working of data based on a situation or task, movement games further contribute to the outlining of a game behaviour focused on fair-play and perseverance. The child learns how to forget about one's own inclinations, interests and feelings, allowing the group's interest to take the upper hand, which involves the practice of self-control, altruism and team spirit.

Through **construction games** children may accomplish imaginative combinations, they may approximate the configuration of certain objects, or they may try to make perfect reproductions, closely monitoring proportion and details. In the first two situations, the construction game is very close to symbolic playing, whereas in the third situation, this kind of game helps children cross over to the realm of real labour. This sort of game elicits space representations and handicrafts especially. Children's willingness to play is amazing. Toys, made of wood, plastic or metal, are very diverse when it comes to size or their infinite possibilities of combination. Various raw materials offer unthought-of opportunities for ingenuity. The teacher must grant children access to a wide range of materials and adequate spaces for the process of construction.

The creative urge that surfaces in the construction game, manifests itself in the use of a variety of materials to minutely or approximately shape two-dimensional or three-dimensional reproductions of real objects. In free or organized activities, the construction game may look like the creation of an initial construction, or the reproduction of a previously presented model, or a construction made according to a pattern. During the first years in kindergarten, the child concentrates on the object s/he is making, and to which s/he attributes significance during construction or afterwards. Construction activities are not characterized by unity; the elements which are built are mostly presented separately, as the child is not concerned with creating connections amongst them. With ageing, the kindergarten child has the tendency to pay more attention to the significance of the building, which has to be decided upon from the very beginning of the action, and which is gradually considered to be more important than the construction itself. That is why older kindergarten children are largely preoccupied with accurately and ingeniously solving construction tasks.

The evolution is obvious also with respect to the choice of the play theme, which becomes more complex, but also when it comes to paying attention to details.

In a longitudinal analysis, the phases of construction play are as follows (Glava, Glava, 2002):

- getting familiar with the materials and the play topic. The child doesn't build but s/he manipulates the construction material: cubes, rosettes, sand, rocks;
- deconstruction and construction of rows and towers;
- building bridges;
- closing some figures;
- creating esthetic structures;

- integrating real objects into play;
- group building with a common topic.

In its turn, the game of building involves relating to aspects of reality which will undergo analysis and synthesis in order to transpose them into built models, a process with unquestionable instructive valences at the level of both knowledge and cognitive skills development.

Through its more pregnant ultimate character, the game of building provides the child with the satisfaction of fulfilling a task and of appreciating the final outcome. Quite often this product becomes a stimulus for continuing the activity of play; the game of building can set the framework for a game of creation with roles.

If we take into consideration the nature of play, we can establish two large categories of games (in Glava, Glava, 2002): creation games and rule-based games which we have previously analyzed.

Conclusions

Play remains the most attractive form of activity in the kindergarten. It continues its existence also in school, but at this level it starts to intertwine with learning. In the kindergarten, work is mainly based on play! Without playing the child is taken out from his/her own world. Through play, s/he interacts, connects with others, communicates, laughs, relaxes and explores the world.

The diversity of games molds perfectly to the diversity of child's types of personality. Through play the child feels free and takes over the world surrounding his/her.

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