

Psychopedagogy of **PLAY**

Gabriela Kelemen



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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 ģotski, 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.

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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).

Vîgotski (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.

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