



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: wooh, wooh; the snake: hisssssss, hisssss; 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 constructors, 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 rumped 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. —

