



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 teacher's 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 next 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.