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Journal of Preschool and Elementary School Education nr 1(1), 27-41

2012

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

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Development of Children's Creative Activity in Preschool

An essential element of the teaching system, which is of vital importance, is the set of educational methods. The most prominent place among these methods is occupied by those methods that develop creative activity. These methods include:

1. The Project Method

The essence of the project method is determined by children's self-reliant work. During that time they are able to practice many skills. Children become involved in the project, which is carried out from the time in which it is being planned until its evaluation. They gain knowledge while searching for answers to some questions or through research activity. The project encompasses many fields of teaching and abilities. Classes are focused on research activity, searching for answers to questions, while using all of the materials.

Nursery school children may carry out two types of educational projects:

- A research project that is based on the collecting and systematizing of informations related to particular issues. As a result of this, items such as albums, interviews or drawings may be produced.
- The project of local operations relies on taking some actions in the local environment (also within the nursery school itself).

The project's realization proceeds along the following stages:

1. Establishing the project's topic
2. Establishing the range of the project
3. Carrying out the project
4. Presenting the project
5. Summarising the project

2. Constructing board games

Games are a great way for developing children's speech, training memory and teaching them how to use various rules, e.g. spelling. Each game is like a story based on the same pattern (the board, pawns indicating particular participants and the race to the finishing line).

The way of constructing all of the games is similar and requires:

- drawing the route of the race, which should be a long path, measuring the right size of tiles and setting the place for the start and finishing line,
- establishing who is going to race, thinking of some traps and bonuses and marking them clearly on the route of the race.
- instructions and rules are established while the board is being drawn (each new game requires the drawing of a new board).

In order to let the children construct the game they need the following accessories:

- sheets of paper, Bristol boards, scraps of smooth wallpaper, fabrics,
- dice,
- felt-tip pens, crayons, scissors, coloured paper, sticky tape,
- Kinder Surprise toys,

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- small toy cars,
 - animal figurines,
 - counters, pebbles, buttons,
 - blocks to measure the tiles for the path,
 - string,
 - lollipop or ice-cream sticks,
 - rubber bands,
 - clothes pegs,
 - dominoes, which can be made of paper, and created by the children if needed,
 - small homogeneous objects, e.g. beans, chestnuts,
 - postcards,
 - measuring tapes,
 - pick-a-sticks,
 - playing cards.

3. Celestyn Freinet's techniques

In the educational and teaching work of the nursery school, in order to release the productive energies within children, some of the following of Freinet's techniques may be used:

- artistic expression – children's unconstrained creation: verbal, artistic, music, motor and in the field of DIY,
- classroom bulletin – thematically collected materials that are used for, among other things, decorating the classroom, in order to display important and current information, and also to exchange letters between nursery schools,
- correspondence – writing letters, classroom bulletins and tape recordings,
- issue portfolios, thematic albums,
- self-prepared stagings,
- interviews,

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- experiences of searching,
 - the weekly planning of classroom work together with the children, summing up which of the planned works were completed.

In Freinet's nursery school classroom there ought to be:

- clay – which is a perfect model-making material,
- sand – which children love sifting between their fingers, and when wet it can become a building material; it can also be a great material for spontaneous experiments connected with measuring and weighing,
- water – which may enable experiences in the field of measuring capacity and, when mixed with paint, is a great tool for artistic expression,
- wood – big elements with a variety of shapes that can be used to construct a range of building structures, various planks, wooden slats, circles, springs, bobbins, string, some nails and the easiest tools for DIY, chestnuts, acorns and cones,
- a dolls corner – quite big doll's-house furniture that can be opened, rearranged, tidied; dolls with a proper supply of clothing; a cupboard with dishes and other items that will allow children to have imitative games that resemble their family environment,
- a blackboard that is hung low and coloured chalk – to encourage the children to draw,
- coloured paper and glue for cutouts and tear-outs, and various pieces of cardboard for sticking these on to,
- paper for drawing – a variety of colours and shapes which give children alternatives to choose from,
- soft pencils, coloured crayons, artistic chalk, school and poster paints with the widest possible range of colours and good brushes,
- linoleum and proper burins to cut into it and a duplicator,
- various shapes of windowpanes and printing ink or oil paints for repetitive work,
- scraps of fabric, canvas, wool, raffia, straw for embroiders and applications.

4. Maria Montessori's method

According to this nursery school upbringing method a child is completely independent while developing cognitive activeness. The teacher's role is simply to create the proper conditions that will enable and stimulate progress, as the motto says: "Help me do it myself". There should be a proper environment that is designed for where a child would find special impulses, which would stimulate any actions. The crucial determinants of an environment that has been prepared in this way are some handy developmental tools that can be used to help the child not the teacher.

5. Carl Orff's method of physical expression through actions

This method is based on a close correlation of physical culture with the culture of rhythm and music, and the culture of words. In this method, the emphasis is placed on expression that results from the child's emotional commitment and creative possibilities. Orff introduced percussion instruments with an uncomplicated playing technique, and for older children string and wind instruments. They include such unmelodic instruments as: drums, a tambourine, small and big drums, sets of bongo drums, maracas, boxes, clappers, castanets, cymbals, clattering rattles, etc. There are melodic instruments as well, such as glockenspiels, metallophones, and xylophones. When teaching older children, string and wind instruments are also used. However, Orff excluded the piano. Thus, as the basis of this method there are forms of games (which are disappearing nowadays) that include: exercises, dances, music, sayings, legends, fairy tales, poetry or prose, etc. These games afford an opportunity to develop children's inventiveness, both those who are talented and those that have fallen behind but which are given the opportunity to improve some of their shortcomings.

6. Alfred and Maria Kniess' method of rhythmical gymnastics

This is a form of creative gymnastics with dancing, which is based on the constant searching of new forms and manners connected with rhythm and music. Aesthetically prepared equipment plays an important role in the Kniess' method for physical exercise, and tools for sound production, such as: double bat, ribbon, rattle, small bells, halves of coconut shells, drums, cymbals, and others. Unusual tools are often used that have been made by the children themselves, which are also used as percussion instruments. Kniess' method of rhythmical gymnastics is characterized by widely understood motor expression and by a high degree of activeness on the part of those who exercise. It inspires new ideas and solutions.

7. Weronika Sherborne Developmental Movement

The purpose of doing exercises according to Sherborne's method is to create circumstances that will allow a child to get to know his own body, improve movement, experience a feeling of strength and fitness, and consequently improve his motor abilities. As a result of this, children may have confidence in themselves and also gain a sense of security. They can be more active, which will manifest itself in greater initiative, and become more creative.

The system of exercises worked out by W. Sherborne is derived from the natural needs of children, which are fulfilled while being in contact with adults. She created her therapeutic system out of so-called frolic, which occurs in the period of early childhood of every healthy child in each normal family. In her programme of developmental movement Weronika Sherborne outlined the following groups of exercises that support the child's progress:

- exercises that make it possible to get to know your own body,
- exercises that let you gain self-confidence and the feeling of safety,

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- exercises that make it easier to establish contact and co-operation with a partner or the whole group,
 - creative exercises.

Developmental movement exercises can take various forms: as individual classes with only one child, or children working in pairs, or they can be in groups of three or four, when adults exercise with the children, or as classes with more people, and they usually last about 30 minutes. Children's partners are often their parents, but they may also be a different adult, teenagers or school children.

8. Josef Gottfrid Thulin's method of making stories through physical actions

In this method the teacher chooses the proper topic of a story that he has invented which serves to stimulate the child's imagination. Next the child is supposed to retell the story with physical movements and presents various situations and events. Each child should do that in his own unique way, and work at his own pace and intensity. Thulin's method of making stories through physical actions favours developing fantasy, which plays a leading role in each child's life. It is the teacher who creates the situations, and the problem of solving them is left to the child's imagination. It requires that the teacher makes good and careful preparations for classes, and understands that the content of the story is just an aid that will allow the children to create their imaginary movements.

9. Emil Jagues-Dalcroze's method

It assumes that in order to activate fully a child, it is necessary to depart from verbalism in the educational process, and instead introduce practical classes of experiencing music before the theory of music

is presented. Dalcroze's method also includes actively training the ear for music, and vocal, instrumental and motor improvisation. Thus, it is a synthesis of the three ways of musical education.

Dalcroze's rhythmical exercises can be divided into two main branches: exercises that are supposed to educate the child musically and those that are all-educational. The first branch came into being as a result of music practice and composition analysis. Here we can find exercises that make children more sensitive to various elements of music (dynamic,agogical, concerning the tempo, articulatory and reacting to melodic element) and exercises that train rhythmic discipline based on the acquisition of practical information about music rhythm (performing the length of notes with physical movements, the music time and music themes, the chains of music themes, polyrhythmic exercises, complementary rhythms, the speed of rhythmic themes). However, the all-educational exercises appeared as the result of observing technical difficulties among children.

10. Edwin E. Gordon method of music learning

This is a method based on stimulating the development of musical thinking through singing. Edwin E. Gordon's method of teaching music was designed for children and seeks to develop musical abilities, musical language and contribute to wide-ranging progress. Classes led according to Edwin E. Gordon's method take the form of group work. At nursery schools they should be introduced in small groups of 6–12 children in a big well-aired room on a carpet. There should also be a variety of props – for instance blocks, balls, scarves, rings, etc. – which along with the music will stimulate the children's particular behaviour.

During these classes there are only three elements: the welcome song, taking the attendance ritual, when the teacher sings the name and surname of a child with a rising fifth, and the child then answers using the same notes inversely, going from the fifth downwards and answers: *Here I am*. When one on the kids is absent, the rest answer by singing: *Ab-*

sent. The third permanent element is a song for goodbye. The teacher may invent her own words for the welcome and goodbye songs that are suitable for the given melody.

11. Bati Strauss' method of active listening to music

In this method children get to know classical and jazz music and also the folklore of various regions. It is based on the usage of many elements like movement, dancing, gestures, singing and the playing of percussion instruments. The aim of Bati Strauss' method is to let the children get to know some pieces of music through so-called 'active listening'. It depends on performing easy rhythmic and dancing choreographies proposed by the teacher. The form of story-telling is very often used.

The new model of active listening to music consists of a few stages:

- Children listen to a particular piece of music and then talk about it (the tempo, dynamics).
- The content of a story is presented through gestures and dancing.
- The orchestra is formed with a conductor in front of it.
- The last stage is the playing of percussion instruments or some unconventional ones according to a graphic score.

The music in these methods is selected in order to apply the following forms of musical education:

- performing the vocal and instrumental music (the singing and playing of percussion instruments),
- creating music as a result of vocal and instrumental improvisation and also through vocal, instrumental and motor improvisation,
- integrating the movement, singing, playing with the use of instruments and speaking.

The exercises proposed are easy to perform and are possible to do at nursery schools. Furthermore, the teacher does not need to have a professional music education.

12. Theatre at nursery school

It is one of the working methods, which to a large extent applies the theory of education through art. It releases in child-actors creative acting, which becomes a source of experiences for them.

The following theatre stagings can be performed at nursery schools:

- cut-outs theatre (silhouette),
- puppet theatre (puppets, jumping jacks, marionettes),
- Chinese shadow theatre,
- judgement over a negative character,
- lively scenery (children arrange the scenery themselves),
- lively theatre (improvisation),
- stagings of literary works.

13. Drama

This is a method that enables children to become acquainted with the world through action. Children learn how to analyse positive and negative reactions while making at the same time corrections to their behaviour. Drama depends on creating situations, outlining problems and attempting to solve them by adopting a role in which children are able to identify themselves with, as well as other people or things; they can also empathise with other personalities.

In drama children have the possibility to observe directly a range of behaviours, including their own and those of other children. They have a chance to analyze the sources of particular reactions, what is positive in

them and what is inappropriate, and how they should be changed. They can see the different ways in which others behave and they can take advantage of good models in order to make instant corrections to their behaviour. In drama the teacher's commands should be simple, and the problem that is to be solved is supposed to be close and well-known by the children. The application of drama as a working method with children enables:

- the development of self-confidence in children,
- the forming of a rounded personality, and the stimulation of harmonious progress,
- the broadening of the range of children's activeness,
- the use of educational interaction of their peer group,
- the use of elements in art in everyday educational practice, which can take a variety of forms (music, theatre, plastic art),
- the development of sensitivity, imagination and experience,
- the creation of situations in which a child can make independent choices and decisions,
- the forming of an open and creative attitude,
- greater emphasis on a child's individual progress,
- the development and enrichment of vocabulary.

A starting point for drama can be: moods and emotions, a screenplay or a poem, a painting or sculpture, a story, a comic strip, photography or illustrations, music or other sounds, and individual experiences. When working with nursery school children one can apply drama techniques, such as drama games, sculptures, and photographs.

14. Music therapy

This is a specific method which uses music and its elements as sources of emotional stimulation and expression, and also non-verbal communication. Applying well matched music may result in the assuaging of

aggressive feelings. After studying the music of many composers it was found that the richest music in terms of high frequencies, which energizes and activates the brain's workings, is Mozart's music. Systematic work on this music revealed a phenomenon which was later called Mozart's Effect.

Music therapy is used in order to:

- disclose and relieve blocked emotions and tension, facilitate integration in a group, and improve communication,
- learn how to rest and relax,
- rationalize perceptive and motor functions,
- sensitize an individual to music and nature,
- improve the psychophysical condition, the rise of a positive attitude in life and vital force.

Music therapy can exert a great influence on children's development and especially:

- develop creative thinking,
- teach simple thinking operations (comparison, analysis, synthesis, abstract thinking, etc.),
- improve disturbed visual, auditory and kinaesthetic functions,
- reduce tension produced by stress,
- improve memory and attention.

15. Relaxation

This is a set of exercises that lead to physical and mental relaxation. It is effective in terms of regenerating strength and eliminating tension caused by various experiences, and exhaustion, weariness that appear after particular forms of behaviour.

The following relaxation techniques can be applied to children at nursery schools:

- Maxwell Malz's method of forming a positive internal image. That is a method which is based on practising the skill of imaginative thinking.
- The training of creative visualisation for children. Visualisation is a way of recalling in the mind images of objects from the past.

16. Conclusion

The methods listed above are different ways of working with children that are designed to release their free creative expression, in contrast to traditional methods. They are educational and developmental methods for nursery school children which can be used to free their activeness and creativity.

The originality of these methods relies most heavily on the assumption that the teacher, beginning with the children's experiences, lets them work according to their own rhythm. The teacher is there to help and encourage children to put still more and more effort in harmony with each child's individual possibilities. It is the child, though, who makes the decision whether to accept the offer or not. The child is also completely free to choose the topic, material or technique.

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Abstract

An essential element of the teaching system, which is of vital importance, is the set of educational methods. A prominent place amongst these is occupied by those methods that develop creative activity; this is because the main element that results in the maximizing of the child's developmental chances is its creative activity.

The article presents the following methods that actively develop the nursery school pupil's creativity: the project method, the construction of board games, Celestyn Freinet's techniques, Maria Montessori's method, Carl Orff's method of physical expression through actions, Alfred and Maria Kniess' method of rhythmical gymnastics, Weronika Sherborne's Developmental Movement, Josef Gottfrid Thulin's method of making stories through physical actions, Emil Jagues-Dalcroze's method, Edwin E. Gordon's method of developing the love of music, Bati Strauss' method of active listening to music, theatre, drama, music therapy, Maxwell Malz's method of forming a positive image of oneself, and the practise of creative visualization for children.

The methods listed above are different ways of working with children that rely on releasing their free creative expression, in contrast to traditional teaching methods that oppose those methods that activate the educational process. They are educational and developmental methods for children who are at nursery school, and they facilitate unconstrained activeness and creation.

Keywords: methods, activity, children, nursery school

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