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**MULTIVALENT ROLE PLAY IN EARLY EDUCATION-
ASCERTAINING STUDY-**

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Abstract

This study is structured in two dimensions: a theoretical one, which implies the assignment of definitions, the identification of specific methodological steps that ensure the instructional and educational sustainability of this role play category, as well as its plurivalence from the perspective of pre-school specific activities and practice. The second dimension resulted in the administration of a questionnaire on a sample of 80 pre-school teachers, through which we aim to validate the plurivalency of the role play in achieving the specific pre-school finality. As a logical consequence of the theoretical approach, the proposed practical study is based on the hypothesis that the role play is a multifaceted character and its use in the context of formal and non-formal education fosters acquisition and achievement of specific aims of preschool education. Thus, we have the intention to verify that this is known and respected by the teachers participating in the study through an item organized on a nominal scale. At the age of pre-school, the content of the role play is not very elaborate, but the formative valences are obvious from the perspective of this study. In our opinion, role play is a creative and interactive didactic method based on the direct and indirect experience of the participants, based on a script and roles with content inspired by reality or imagined.

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1. Introduction

The initial theorization of the notion of role play was made by Jacob Levy Moreno, according to whom human personality can be defined from the perspective of key notions such as: role play, self, social atom or interpersonal relationships.

Through role play "integration of the everyday routine in the life of the group with experimental situations played, created and lived by the members of the group takes place, situations that stimulate them to assume different roles and to liberate, channel and structure their interests" (Moreno, 1980).

Assuming a role play is interpreted differently, depending on the age, but also on the life experiences of the participants. "Thinking in this manner, a role is not a totally stable approach, we are dealing with a dynamic combination of two categories of factors: situational (task requirements) and personal (values, attitudes, motivation and ability)" (Pânișoară, 2008).

Professor Cerghit (2006) defines role play through simulation, so that "interpretation requires the role holder to perform effective, specific behaviors, depending on the reference knowledge, the understanding of the obligations and rights that interfere with those who take part, in essence, in sharing this experimental situation " (p. 265).

The anticipated effect of role play reflects on the level of learning it produces, so "role play is the students way to actively and interactively participate in the teaching process, which consists in conducting simulation activities of in-home relationships, professions, social status functions, activities, facts, situations, states of things, phenomena, systems, etc., followed by the analysis of the representations, feelings, attitudes observed during the interpretation of the characters " (Bocos, 2002).

In our opinion, role play is a creative and interactive didactic method based on the direct and indirect experience of the participants, based on a script and roles with content inspired by reality or imagined.

2. Problem Statement

It should be noted that the role play transcends the entire scholastic path of an individual, as a consequence we encounter it at the age of pre-school, small and middle school education, but also in high school or even university education (in practical or seminar activities). If methodologies, content or "actors" differ from age to age, the stages of role play remain a constant of this game at all age levels.

Regardless of age or content, the following steps are specific to role play methodology:

- identifying / determining, choosing and analyzing a real or fictitious hypothesis, the content of which can be attributed to the simulation action and can be correlated with a specific purpose of the participants age;
- adapting the content of the game according to the age of the participants, the material resources available or own design, the time limits, the variants of the role play game (dramatization, dramatic or creative games with stories and fairy tales or everyday life, shadow theater, puppet theater or marionette theater) and the objectives of the game;
- scenario design and role structure, in accordance with the potential of the participants and their number (depending on the context, description sheets can be made for both script and role, but there are also situations in which roles can be interpreted ad-hoc);

- assigning / self-attributing roles and awareness of the participants regarding the tasks to be done;
- creating an environment conducive to role play unfolding by configuring the space on a symbolic or real level depending on the content, variants and complexity of the game;
- learning the content of each role assigned by each participant or teacher guidance, as well as the spontaneous construction of the roles, depending on the formal or non-formal context and the variants of the game;
- the actual role play, in which the participants interpret the roles in accordance with the previous scenario;
- analyzing the way in which the game took place on the basis of free discussions, giving general and individual assessments, meant to provide feedback to the participants, having an improvement character where the situation so requires;
- generalizing and promoting and disseminating good practice with appropriate evidence.

3. Research Questions

Analyzing role play in terms of the multiple valences it triggers allows us to identify the functions that this category of games performs:

- *the informative function* familiarizes participants with certain behaviors, values, attitudes and ways of being or thinking, specific to the roles played or other "staged" roles;
- *the formative function* is realized by realizing and reaching the different end-stages specific to the stage of development and the age level of the participants;
- *the social function* is highlighted by the interpretation of the roles assumed as facilitators of the socialization process (primary, secondary or social re-socialization);
- *the motivational function* creates the premises for the development of the empathy capacity, the identification of the participants with the interpreted character and the aspirations of those around them;
- *the anticipatory function* is performed in the context of the interpretation of some roles necessary for the subsequent occupation of social statuses;
- *the evaluation function* is manifested by the surprise and validation of the positive aspects and the invalidation of the negative ones, on the basis of valuable judgments attributed to their specific roles and contents;
- *the symbolic-imaginative function* of using objects as other objects by transforming or substituting them, by assigning other properties or by referring to absent objects / places;

The enumeration of functions attributed to role play creates the premises of its plurivalence in the sense of forming and developing the plenitude of human personality, enveloped by emotional, cognitive and behavioral traits, which is learned and developed through experiences gained in contexts favoured by role play.

4. Purpose of the Study

As a logical consequence of the theoretical approach outlined above, proposed practical study based on the hypothesis that the role play is a multifaceted character and its use in the context of formal and non-formal education fosters acquisition and achievement of specific aims of preschool education.

5. Research Methods

From a methodological point of view, we have appealed to an experimental study and questionnaire survey method, perhaps one of the most often used quantitative methods in field research, with priority being given to the practical side, more precisely to the formulation of immediate effectiveness conclusions.

The construction of the questionnaire, in addition to factual items by which we acquired information about objective, verifiable facts (age, didactic degree), we also introduced closed questions with a range of pre-coded and easily quantifiable answers and open questions requiring building, reply uttering.

The questionnaire was administered to a non-probabilistic sample, consisting of 80 teachers for preschool, kindergarten, randomly selected from 4 extended program kindergartens and 5 normal program kindergartens, assigned to the following age categories: 9 under 25 years, 45 between 25-40 years, 22 between 40-55 years and 4 over 55 years. The dispersion according to the didactic experience, corroborated with the obtained didactic degree, highlights the following configuration: 5 junior teachers, 22 with the definitive degree, 22 with the II didactic degree and 31 with the "I" didactic degree.

It is noted that most of the teachers participating in the study have a teaching experience of at least 10 years, so that the answers provided are based on a thorough knowledge of the curriculum specific to pre-school education and the methodological norms for its application.

6. Findings

In line with the *Early Learning Curriculum*, role play is found in the *Selected Games and Didactic Activities*, which children choose and which help them progressively socialize and become initiated in the knowledge of the physical world; the social and cultural environment based on the many functions that role play fulfills.

Thus, we have the intention to verify that this is known and respected by the teachers participating in the study through an item organized on a nominal scale and obtained the following results: Of the 80 respondents, the vast majority, respectively 61 teachers said that role play is part of the *Selected Games and Didactic Activities* (ALA), 7 opted for ALA, ADE and ADP, 6 for ALA and ADP, 3 for ALA and Experienced Experiences (ADE), 1 for Personal development activities (ADP), 1 for ALA, ADE, ADP and extracurricular activities and 1 selected ALA and extracurricular activities. From a theoretical point of view, the vast majority of respondents (76.2%) gave correct answers and 23.7% responded in accordance with the practical needs, in the sense that role play can be used in all types of specific didactic activities of pre-school education.

In line with the first item, we tested on a three-choice (very useful, useful and useless) orderly scale, the usefulness of role play in pre-school activities, obtaining the following results: 62.5% of the

study participants believed that role play is very useful in achieving the specificities of the development domains, invoked by the specific curriculum and 37.5% opted for the usefulness of this game. Through another pre codified item, I questioned the frequency with which teachers use the role play for a week. Thus, 50 of the respondents (62.5%) use the role play in the didactic activity twice a week, 17 (21.2%) call for role play daily, 1 teacher once a week and 2 of them use occasionally this type of game. We can again remark that the vast majority of teachers consider role play as a basic activity in teaching.

The open item that helped respondents to use the role play as a multipurpose character helped to validate our hypothesis. Responses have been formulated which have highlighted the following advantages, ranked in order of frequency:

- stimulates thinking, imagination and creativity (about 95% of respondents);
- contributes to socio-emotional development (70%);
- facilitates assertive communication, socialization process, and familiarizes children with various situations of everyday life (65%);
- it contributes to the development of language and communication (50%);
- it supports the correct formation of self-esteem (25%).

Although at the age of pre-school, the content of the role play is not very elaborate, its formative valences are obvious from the perspective of this study.

7. Conclusion

Certainly, we must assume some disadvantages of such a study: the impossibility of describing the causality of reactions, the lack of standardization of the questions, the characteristics of non- probabilistic sampling, the application of the questionnaire, etc. These limits do not ensure the generalization and representativeness of data at the level of the entire educational system, nor can sampling error be calculated, but can be considered as the co-ordinates of the use, with priority of role play, as support in didactic approaches that contribute to the achievement of the pre-school education objectives .

Role play implies interdependence between cognition, motility and socio-emotional, and those children who invent complex and diverse game scenarios are more socially competent, are better able to maintain social relationships with other children, negotiate, to solve the conflicts that arise, to regulate the appropriate emotions (Bergen, 2002).

The plurivalency of role play allows us to affirm that it can be approached at all times during a kindergarten day, at different intensity, depending on the content of learning, age, previous experiences, the teaching material at hand, personality and the availability of the teaching staff and the objectives they are targeting.

"As a field of pedagogical research, role play offers special satisfaction through the many educational valences it possesses"(Popescu-Țigănilă, 2014).

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