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RHYTHM, PLAY AND GAMES

UNIT 3: Play and children development

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UNIT 3. PLAY AND CHILDREN DEVELOPMENT

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UNIT 3. PLAY AND CHILDREN DEVELOPMENT

What are the main goals of this unit?

1. • To know the different aspects that children development involves.
2. • To know what cognitive, social and motor skills children improve through play.
3. • To understand the importance of play in children development.
4. • To know the different teachers' roles in play activities.
5. • To know what a toy is and how to choose and classify them.

UNIT 3. PLAY AND CHILDREN DEVELOPMENT

1. COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Games are amazing educative tools we can use in order to facilitate children's development. Through games we can internalize values, rules, concepts and abilities. When playing, children are improving attention, memory and creativity (skills related to intelligence). They jump, run, play with puzzles and jigsaws, pretend to be teachers or doctors, etc. and all these actions contribute to children's cognitive, physical, linguistic, social and emotional development. And the most incredible thing is that they do it unconsciously, enjoying the process, and teacher should be aware of these feelings when planning lessons in the classroom.

Learning comes after repetition and training. Thus, including play activities in our lessons is indispensable; it enriches the teaching-learning process making it enjoyable.

One of our main goals as teachers is to find the aspects of the game that promote children development in a pleasant way.

The cognitive development involves social and physical environment comprehension and logico-mathematical knowledge.

"Piaget made fundamental distinctions among three kinds of knowledge, according to their sources: physical knowledge, social-conventional knowledge, and logicomathematical knowledge (Piaget [1945] 1951; [1967] 1971)."(Kamii, C. 2014:1).

Physical knowledge: it is related to interaction with objects from the child environment. Children need to interact with the environment and to manipulate objects in order to analyze their physical characteristics: hardness, colour, weight, taste, texture, etc.

Thus, physical knowledge comes from outside, from the child's surrounding environment.

Social knowledge: The first social context for a child is his/her family. Children learn about the language, social rules, traditional festivals, etc. It is based on a social consensus. Some examples of this knowledge are waving hands to say hello/goodbye or the pretend play. Thus, this knowledge is acquired through contact with other people (family, teachers and classmates, among others), films/TV series and personal experiences.

There are three main resources that children use in order to acquire social knowledge: **observation, imitation and pretend game.**

Social knowledge involves:

- People knowledge.
- Social organization knowledge.
- Values and rules knowledge.
- Cultural productions knowledge (paintings, music, history, language ...).

Thus, as we are transmitting cultural products (such as skipping rope songs or riddles for instance) this knowledge involves a cultural identity transmission.

Logical-mathematical knowledge: The source of this knowledge is within the child. It comes from mental actions derived from the interaction with objects. When a child relates an object to another, he/she can say that one of them is bigger/smaller than the other, for instance. Comparison is not an external condition but a mental process within the child.

Thus, we can divide the logical-mathematical knowledge in different skills:

- **Ordering:** organizing objects according to a guideline. Some play activities may be organizing objects according size, making a circle to play or tidying up after playing.
- **Classification:** categorizing objects. Some play activities may be separating lentils from chickpeas or categorizing toys according to a rule.
- **Seriation:** organizing related objects in series. Some examples of play activities of this type may be making necklaces using different colour beads neatly repeated or building a train with colour wagons following a model (blue-green-yellow-blue-green-yellow…).
- **Number:** expressing quantity. We should bear in mind that we are not dealing with digits, but quantities. Some play activities to practice it may be counting objects aloud (marbles, stickers, etc.) or counting squares when playing ludo or another board game.

1.1. THE COGNITIVE SKILLS

"Although children already have certain knowledge and skills by the time they start school, school encourages the development of more complex skills. At school, children have new responsibilities, such as completing their work in class and bringing the things they need each day." (Australian Government, Kidsmatter, 2013:3)

According to Bloom's Taxonomy, children cognitive development involves two kinds of cognitive skills: **Low Order Thinking Skills (LOTS)** (remembering, understanding and applying) and **High Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)** (analyzing, evaluating and creating).

LOW ORDER THINKING SKILLS

a) **Attention:** Before memory, we will see some lines about attention. It involves perception through senses and spending time focused on one thing. "*Playing games like 'I Spy', 'Simon Says' and 'What's the time Mr. Wolf?' are creative and effective ways of developing attention skills in young children". ." (Australian Government, Kidsmatter, 2013:3).*

Many children show difficulties to focus on a task for a long period of time. It is common in young learners and not necessarily a disorder. We can support children to develop this skill through play activities.

b) **Remembering:** Once children have developed the attention skill, they need to retain the information they have perceived through senses in order to develop significative learning. "*Memory is crucial for learning as children need to be able to retain previously learned ideas so they can build on them". (Australian Government, Kidsmatter, 2013:3)*

We can take advantage of play activities that requires memorization such as rhythmic activities (songs, riddles, chants,...) or rule games.

c) **Understanding.** This skill is related to the ability to understand concepts and problems.

d) **Applying.** The child is able to apply the acquired knowledge into new situations.

HIGH ORDER THINKING SKILLS

a) **Analysing.** This skill is directly related to logical thinking. Children are able to separate a concept into its components in order to reach conclusions.

There are two main types of logical thinking:

a) Inductive thinking. From a particular observation the child gets a general principle.
Example: If I see two wheels, a handlebar and one seat, I can say I am in front of a bicycle or a motorbike.

b) Deductive thinking. From a general principle the child infers particular facts.
Example: If I know that I am in front of a bicycle, I can infer that the object has two wheels, one handlebar and a seat.

Children need to develop this skill in order to cope with problems. A problem can be defined as the unsatisfactory state that occurs because of a deviation between a goal that is predicted and the result that is obtained in a certain situation. Through this skill children are able to analyse the problem thoroughly and solve it.

In order to solve a problem we can use two methods:

1) **Trial and error.** It consists in trying different strategies at random until achieving the desired result. It is the simplest way to do it.
2) **Situation analysis.** It consists in ordering the different elements in order to find the best solution. It implies an analysis of the situation.

b) **Evaluating**. Children make judgments about an idea, comparing and supporting it. After evaluating the situation, valuing its positive and negative aspects, the child is able to make decisions.

c) **Creating.** It is the ability to observe the world with a different approach or to suggest a new point of view when solving a problem.

Creativity comes from a specific type of thinking process: the divergent thinking. In fact, we can say that there are two types of thinking:

1) **Convergent thinking.** It looks for a conventional result.
2) **Divergent thinking.** It is the creative thinking, the ability to find new answers to a problem.

Regarding creativity, it is important to point out the importance of creative play. *"Creative play is any play that promotes self-expression and uses imagination as the basis of the play. Creative play can be done in numerous ways such as art, construction, movement (dance), pretend or dramatic play, role play (dress up) etc. Creative play is important for children to learn to express their emotions, ideas and to develop their sense of identity" (Price, B and Green, A. 2015:2).*

This table shows different actions children can do in order to develop some cognitive skills.

From 5 years of age, most children…	From 8 years of age, most children…	From 12 years of age, most children…	Skills developed
• can picture and think about objects and events in their minds, such as using realistic objects and/ or reasonable substitutes during pretend play (eg they might use a banana as a telephone)	• can think logically about real objects and events that can be seen (eg can easily learn how to use the washing machine when you show them, but may not get it right if you just try telling them) • think in 'black and white' terms about what is fair, right or wrong • learn best through hands-on experiences	• are beginning to think in more hypothetical, creative and abstract ways • can understand ideas without having hands-on experience	**Thinking**
• have a vocabulary of 2,000 words or more, learning as many as 5–10 new words each day • use several words in a sentence	• understand and carry out instructions with multiple steps • like to describe personal experiences in great detail	• use longer and more complex sentences • understand different ways of using language to communicate with others	**Language**
• have a short attention span of approximately 15 minutes	• have an increased ability to focus on one thing at a time • are better at ignoring distractions • are proud to complete tasks	• have a longer attention span • can stay focused on completing a task (eg school assignments)	**Attention**
• can make simple decisions on their own, (eg deciding what shoes to wear) • can memorise basic information (eg address and phone number).	• have increased problem-solving ability, (eg they may be systematic in looking for a misplaced toy).	• like to solve complex problems • have an expanded memory ability which improves their long-term recall.	**Problem-solving and memory**

https://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/sites/default/files/public/KMP_C3_CDTL_AboutThinkingAndLearning.pdf

SUMMARY

- The cognitive development involves the social and physical environment comprehension and logico-mathematical knowledge.
- **Physical knowledge:** it is related to interaction with objects from the child environment.
- **Social knowledge:** children learn from the social context (family, school, TV series, films…).
    - It involves people, social organization, values and rules and cultural productions knowledge.
- **Logical-mathematical knowledge:** It comes from mental actions derived from the interaction with objects.
    - The logical-mathematical skills are: ordering, classification, seriation and number.
- **Cognitive skills:**
    - LOW ORDER THINKING SKILLS:
        - Attention
        - Remembering.
        - Understanding
        - Applying
    - HIGH ORDER THINKING SKILLS:
        - Analyzing:
            - Inductive Thinking
            - Deductive Thinking.
        - Evaluating
        - Creating
            - Convergent Thinking
            - Divergent Thinking: Creative Thinking.

2. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Affective and social developments are closely linked. Thus, affective relationships will affect children during their whole lives.

Social development involves values, rules, roles, attitudes, traditions and behaviour acquisition.

In other words, social development involves three aspects:

- Social knowledge (from the cognitive point of view),
- Social behaviour acquisition
- Values and rules acquisition.

2.1. PLAYING IN HISTORY

Playing is a social activity that has been practiced for all cultures throughout history. Many civilizations all over the world have left different remainders that are related to play; we can find these remainders from Mayan, Aztec and Inca cultures (America), from Greek, Celtic and Roman cultures (Europe) and from Egyptian culture (Africa), among others. Bearing this idea in mind, we can imagine the important role that playing has had in history.

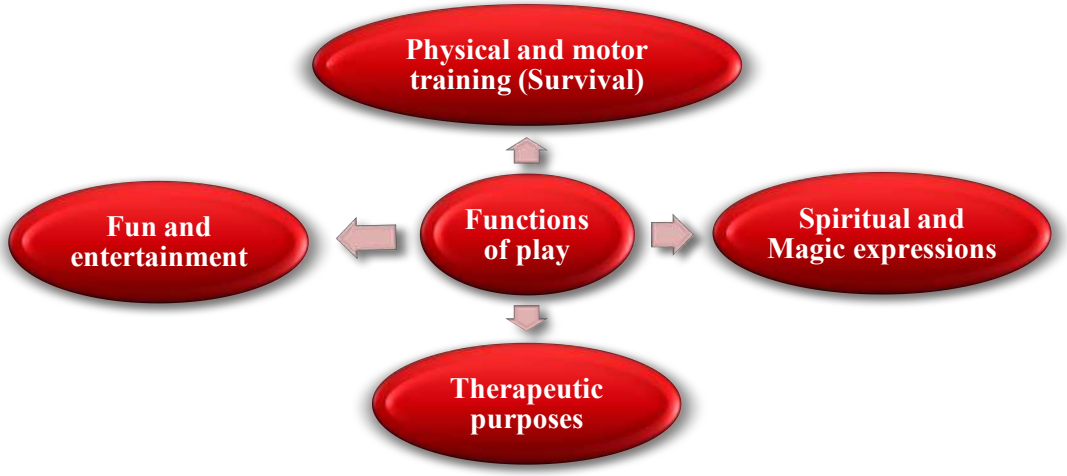
"A legend relates that swing was invented by Baco god. Some marbles and clay dices were found in some Mesopotamia and Egypt excavations and in Ur city some bones pieces that seems to be a domino were found too.

Heads and tails emerged when the use of coins became popular. (...)The game of Goose was already played in Ancient Greece and it spread throughout the rest of Europe during the Middle Ages". (Adapted text from García and LLull, 2009: 23).

"Anthropologically, playing played different functions:

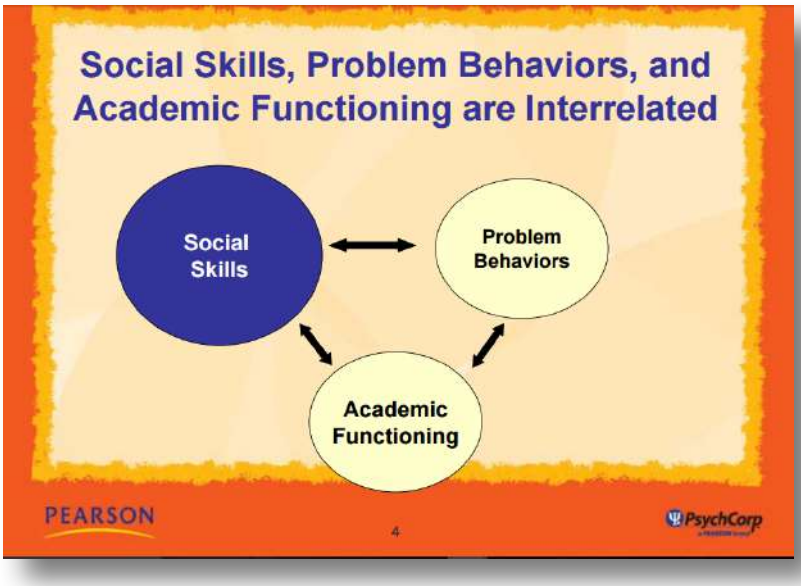
- *Physical and motor skills training. These skills are essential to survive (hunting, chasing enemies, etc.).*
- *Spiritual expression. Some games are related to magic and religious rites. An example may be the ball game in Mayan civilization.*
- *Therapeutic purposes. Many cultures use games as a way to relax from the daily routines.*
- *Fun and entertainment. Human beings have considered playing as leisure activities to spend free time."*

(Adapted text from García and LLull, 2009: 24).



2.2. THE SOCIAL SKILLS

Social skills acquisition is necessary in order to avoid problems behaviour and to improve academic results in the school.



http://images.pearsonassessments.com/images/PDF/Webinar/EC_SocialSkills_elliott.pdf

"Socially acceptable learned behaviors that enable an individual to interact effectively with others and to avoid or escape negative social interactions with others". (Gresham & Elliott).

Gresham and Elliot established the acronym CARES to define the main social skills:

- *"**C**ooperation:*
  - *Helping others,*
  - *Sharing materials with peers*
  - *Complying with rules.*
- ***A**ssertion:*
  - *Asking others for information.*
  - *Responding to peer's pressure.*
- ***R**esponsibility*
  - *Respect other's properties.*
- ***E**mpathy*
  - *Concern for a peer's or adult's feelings.*
- ***S**elf-control*
  - *Responding appropriately to teasing".*

(Elliot & Busse, 1991:63)

Teachers should promote social skills in the classroom and playing provides an opportunity to do it. The school is a socialization area for children and most of these social skills are developed in it. Our role as the group leader, guiding the social skills acquisition process in the classroom and in the playground, (supporting solving-problems and providing children with strategies to relate with others) becomes crucial during Infant and Primary Education.

2.3. PLAYING AS A SOCIALIZATION AGENT

Children interact with other children through games. Thus, playing is the most important socialization agent for young children.

Through playing children learn different strategies that will support their social development. For instance, children learn how to take turns through playing heads or tails. Furthermore, children play different, complementary or similar roles in games and this is a real life reflection. One example may be when children play thieves and police games; they are representing two parallel roles that are complementary and reflect how this relationship is in the society. Moreover, police-officers chase thieves and the thieves have to hide from the police-officers. Helen Schwartzman explains this characteristic of games in this sentence: *"Lancy's study (...) specifically made these associations in his discussions of 'make-believe' blacksmith play, hunting play, the bambé game (a model of the adult society), warrior play, and new occupations incorporated to children's play (e.g., driver, soldier and rubber tapper)."* (Schwartzman, H.B.- 1978:109).

"Through games child learns cultural context concepts, incorporating progressively to the real world. In this complex process, play activities will become less autonomous and selfish in order to increasingly participate in adult life game, a much more serious play, more realistic and authentic and no so pleasant." (Adapted text from García, V. and LLull, J. 2009:21)..

Therefore, **playing prepares children for adult life**, introducing some habits and routines such as housework, working and taking care of children, among others. Because of this, playing becomes an extraordinary tool for children social development. When playing, children learn from others unconsciously and acquire cultural habits that will facilitate their social integration. *"Humans share with most primates the ability to learn from others even when the models aren't intending to demonstrate or instruct".* (Lancy, D. 2012:15).

On the other hand, **make-believe or pretend play facilitates the social roles comprehension.** Children pretend to be doctors, teachers, mothers, fathers, etc. and try to copy their behaviour and attitudes from their own lives. *"Child's play is viewed as imitation or preparation for adults' activities and social behaviour".* (Schwartzman, H.B.- 1978:133).

"The importance of children acquiring useful skills from those older and more expert via imitation is widely acknowledged. "...we are such a thorough-going cultural species that it pays children, as a kind of default strategy, to copy willy-nilly much of the behavioral repertoire they see enacted before them (Hopper, et al 2012: 105)." (Lancy, D. 2012:12).

According to this statement, playing acquires a dimension of cultural transmitting since children imitate adults' behaviour, clothing, habits, social organization, etc. through make-believe/pretend play. Thus children acquire knowledge about the social habits and routines through make-believe play. The roles children represent when playing may reproduce some personality or familiar features and this condition enriches playing, becoming a learning for life tool. According to García and LLull, *"Some play activities consequences are critical judgement, personal orientation to facts and the ability to express opinions and attitudes".*(Text adapted from García, V. And LLull, J. 2009:11).

Playing provides children with the opportunity to play with others. According to Lancy, *"children consigned to the company of older siblings and their friends have joined a cadre of excellent* role *models".* (Lancy, D. 2012:14).

Therefore, from 3 years old we can say that the child is able to interact with other children in **group games**. These games are amazing tools to promote children social development since they have to follow rules, pay attention to the others, wait in lines for their turn, take turns, etc.

Summarizing, through social games children improve their social development acquiring habits, values and rules from the society.

SUMMARY

- Social development involves three aspects: social knowledge (from the cognitive point of view), social behaviour acquisition and values and rules acquisition.
- Anthropologically, playing plays different functions: Physical and motor skills training, Spiritual expression, Therapeutic purposes and Fun and entertainment.
- The main social skills are: Cooperation, Assertion, Responsibility, Empathy and Self-control.
- Through social games children improve social development, acquiring habits, values and rules from the society.

3. PHYSICAL AND MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

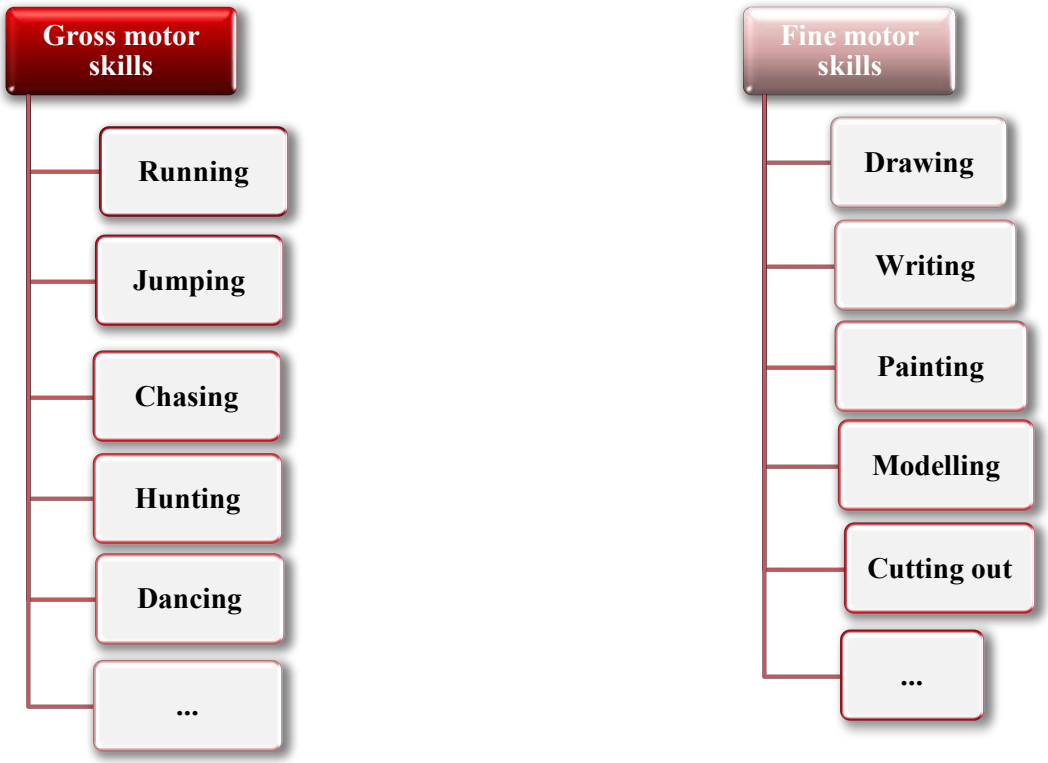
3.1. Motor skills

We can differentiate gross and fine motor skills. "***Gross motor skills*** *require whole body movement and involve the large core muscles of the body such as standing, walking, running, and sitting. (...). Having good gross motor skills is an important building block for other areas such as school – being able to sit at a desk for long periods of time requires strong core muscles and posture, and is also necessary to be able to learn to write". (Brittany and Green, 2015:2).*

Children can benefit from gross motor skills and creative games. *"They encourage children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, physical, cognitive and emotional capacities. Play is also crucial for healthy brain development. Providing a combination of free play and planned gross motor experiences will support children to develop physically strong, healthy bodies and minds".* (Brittany and Green, 2015: 4).

Regarding **fine motor skills**, children need to develop them in order to be able to write, draw or paint, for instance. *"Fine motor skills involve the use of the small muscles in the fingers, hand and arm to manipulate, control and use tools and materials. Hand-eye coordination, where a person uses their vision to control the movements and actions of their small muscles, is also an important component of fine motor skills development".* (Owens, A. 2008:1).

Gross and fine motor activities:



3.2. Games and physical development

Genetics is crucial in child's physical development but exercising also plays an important role in it.

"Physical activity provides many benefits that can positively affect children's health, their mental and social well-being, and their performance in the classroom". (Katz, D. 2008:7).

Physical activity allows children to acquire a progressive autonomy, becoming less independent on adults. Imitation plays an important role in mobility acquisition although the child tends to explore the surrounding world, facing challenges and improving body control on his/her own.

Physical activity also supports some socialization skills that children will find useful in their lives. *"Exercising in a group setting with other children can instill a sense of belonging. It can also help them develop important life skills such as taking turns, sharing, and cooperating with others. This in turn can have a positive effect on the classroom environment".* (Katz, D. 2008:7).

Mobility also improves spatial perception. Through body movement the child is able to differentiate near, far, under, over, and so on.

In order to promote motor development, children need to count on a free space to move on, without risks. At the beginning of this process they need adults support, but as he/she progresses the physical adults support becomes less important and the child tends to seek adults approval and encourage rather than help. Thus, we can say that external motivation becomes an important strength in children's physical and motor development.

Movement in playing is present from the beginning of the child's life in different ways although it becomes more complex as the child is getting older. Some examples may be:

- The coupling of pieces in a puzzle or jigsaw.
- Body coordination acquisition in order to chase other children in games.
- Hand coordination to dress a doll.
- …

As children grow up, they need more room for playing. Playgrounds, parks and other spaces become essential for their physical development. Play centers also provide children with appropriate places to run, jump, etc. In other words, playgrounds, parks and play centers must satisfy their movement needs.

SUMMARY

- We can differentiate gross and fine motor skills.
- **Gross motor skills** require whole body movement and involve the large core muscles of the body such as standing, walking, running, and sitting.
- **Fine motor skills** involve the use of the small muscles in the fingers, hand and arm to manipulate, control and use tools and materials.
- Physical activities allow children to acquire a progressive autonomy, support socialization skills and improve spatial perception.

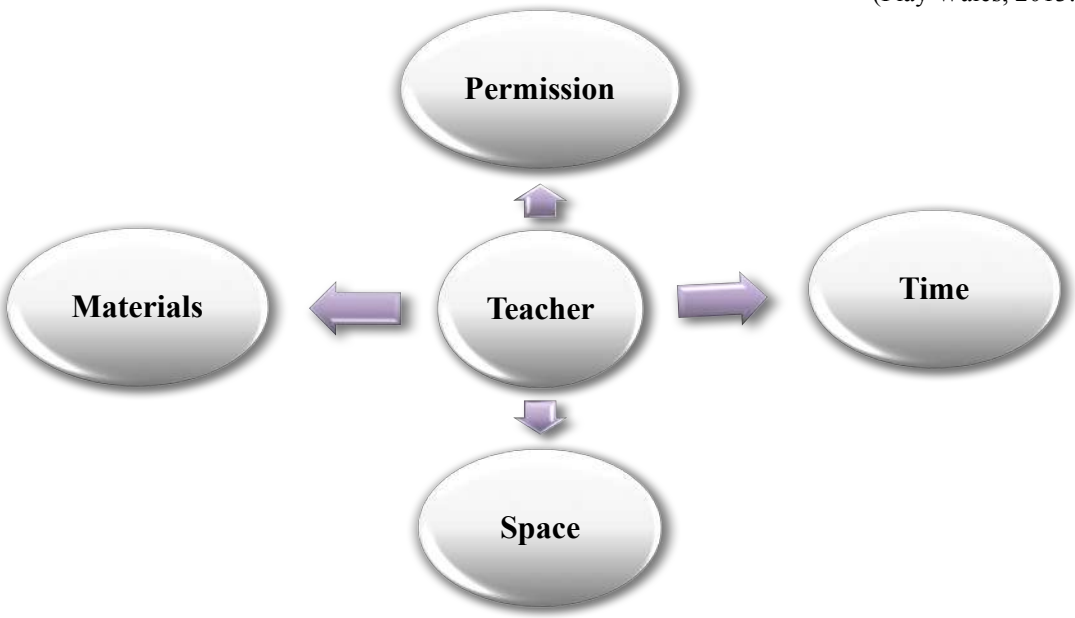
4. THE ROLES OF ADULTS/TEACHERS IN PLAY

Sometimes, Infant Education children need a leader to guide the play moments. Teachers can play this role, letting them be the center of the learning process and guiding them to develop cognitive, social and physically. In this sense, we need to understand that time for free play is essential for children, but they also need guided play.

According to Play Wales, *"adults affect children's play significantly:*

- *We affect what children experience (permission).*
- *We regulate time for play opportunities (time)*
- *We impact on the how and if space is made available (space)*
- *We provide (or deny) materials (materials)".*

(Play Wales, 2013:1)



4.1. PERMISSION

Teachers allow children to freely play in the classroom and in the playground although they usually put into practice other techniques that are not playing in the classrrom. Thus, children need teacher's permission to play.

Furthermore, as children make friends through playing and interacting with children from different cultures, ages and abilities, the school planning in Infant and Primary Education (especially the first years) includes a lot of time for free and guided play activities.

However, we should be consequent with our role in play moments, with a cheerful and motivating attitude towards the play activity but respecting the children's space. In other words, "*Being playful ourselves can also encourage play but as a general principle we should be cautious about getting too involved when children are playing." (PlayWales, 2013:2).*

On the other hand, there are some situations in which the teacher's participation in games is necessary:

- *"When children ask for it. (...)*
- *When children need us to act as a resource, such as providing an extra pair of hands.*
- *When a child is unhappy or distressed. (...)*
- *When there are serious disputes that the children are unable to resolve themselves. (...).*
- *When there is violence, harm or danger. (...). It is our responsibility to ensure the play environment feels safe and secure even when children are engaged in risky activities.*
- *When there is a hazard that has not been detected by the child."*

(Play Wales, 2013:3)

4.2. TIME

One of the consequences of social changes in last decades is the decrease of children's play time. This reduction of play time is more detrimental to young learners. Because of this, Infant and Primary Education teachers (especially the first years) should plan free and guided play time as we have seen that playing is crucial for children's development.

"By making time for children's play we promote and value children's freedom, independence and choice and these characteristics perform a crucial role in children's resilience, ability to deal with stress and anxiety, and general wellbeing."

(Play Wales, 2013:4)

4.3. SPACE

Schools planners should include playful elements in the classroom and playground. For this purpose the classroom organization in corners provides children with spaces for playing indoors. On the other hand, swings, slides, sports fields and other playful elements should be placed in the playground.

A quality children's playground should include opportunities to discover the world (playing with sand and water, for instance), to exercise (jumping, hanging on bars, running, hiding, etc.) and to interact with others.

4.4. MATERIALS

Children do not need practically anything to play; they are able to play with the sand from the ground, water and their hands. However, we can provide them with some materials in order to encourage playing. These materials may be buckets, shovels and watering cans to play with sand or balls to play different sport games. In fact, the most useful materials for play are 'loose parts'. *"The term '**loose parts'** was coined by the architect Simon Nicholson in the 1970s who proposed that the more moveable and adaptable materials an environment contained the more creative and inventive children would be."* (Play Wales, 2013: 4). Loose parts may be sand, buckets, blocks, water, fabric, rope, etc. Thus, we do not need to spend much money to provide children with materials to play. Moreover, loose parts foster creativity and imagination, as they may be whatever (depending on the child's mind).

Taking into account this information, we can say that the main teachers' roles in games are:

- **Conductor**: explaining and checking understanding of the game rules and process. We should give the instructions and solve the possible doubts.
- **Assessor**: evaluating the activity throughout the process. We should assess our own work and children's improvements but not to grade them.
- **Prompter**: encouraging children to participate or making suggestions about the activity steps.
- **Participant**: playing if it is necessary.
- **Facilitator**: teachers should support children when they ask for help.
- **Spectator**: observing children playing and write down comments about the process.
- **Conciliator**: ending disagreements in the group in a peaceful way.

SUMMARY

- Teachers usually affect children games in different ways:
  - Affecting shat children experience (permission)
  - Regulating time for play opportunities (time).
  - Impacting on the how and if space is made available (space).
  - Providing materials (materials).
- Teacher roles in play activities may be: conductor, assessor, prompter, participant, facilitator, spectator and conciliator.

5. TOYS

5.1. CONCEPT

A toy is an object that a child uses in order to develop a play activity. It can be bought or made by the player (some examples may be boxes, branches, plastic bags, etc.). There are toys because we play although children can play without toys. Teachers can use toys as a children development tool.

5.2. HOW TO CHOOSE A TOY

Toys make sense when they respond to the player needs. Therefore, "*a good toy would be the one that promotes children intelligence, responds to their interests or creates new ones, allows transformations, leads him/her to discover the world, and, finally, arouses the desire to play.*" (Adapted text from López Matallana & Villegas, 1995:53).

Thus, according to López Matallana and Villegas (1995), we should bear in mind different aspects in order to choose a toy:

1) The amount of toys of the classroom.

We should take into account not only the amount but the variety of toys in our classroom. It does not mean that we should have as many toys as possible because it may produce distraction. Sometimes the economical resources are not enough to buy all the toys we would like to. In this case, we can take into consideration this order to choose toys.

- 1st. Big group toys, plastic material and simple and multipurpose toys.
- 2nd. We can add small group toys.
- 3rd. All types of toys, including the ones that promote individual playing.

2) Inclusion and exclusion of toys.

INCLUSION CRITERIA

- Pedagogic or creative criteria: "*we consider a toy as pedagogic when it promotes imagination and it is adapted to the player mature level*". (Adapted text from López Matallana & Villegas, 1995:54).
- Recreational criteria: a toy should provide children with enjoyable and pleasant moments. It cannot be boring.
- Resistance criteria: a toy should be resistant, as many children will play with it.
- Practicality criteria: "*the selected toys should be easy to order, keep and control(…) Toys that can be use only once or with pieces or batteries to replace are not practical at all.*" (Adapted text from López Matallana & Villegas, 1995:54).

EXCLUSION CRITERIA

- The law: we should consider the current law about toys. Two laws are crucial about toys:
  - Directive 88/378/CEE, 3rd of May about approximation of the laws of the Member States on the safety of toys. This law coordinated the safety requirements for toys of all the Members States of the European Union with the purpose to achieving a single market for toys and ensuring the free movement of toys.
  - Directive 2009/58/CE, 18th of June about safety of toys. It improved the previous law.

- R.D. 1295/2011, 26th of August about safety of toys.

  https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2011/08/31/pdfs/BOE-A-2011-14252.pdf

The current law establishes that we cannot consider toys:

- Decorative objects.
- Products of adults' collections, such as assembly kits and firearms and historical toys' reproductions.
- Sports equipment.
- Skateboards and skates.
- Electric vehicles.
- Swimming accessories such as rubber rings.
- More than 500 pieces jigsaw.
- Guns and air guns. (Water guns are considered are not included in this group).
- Fireworks.
- Darts with sharp end.
- Functional and scientific educative toys that are used under an adult supervision (electric oven/iron or chemistry games).
- Computers or similar.
- Interactive software aimed to play, like CD's.
- Dummies for babies.
- Appealing lamps.
- Fashion accessories.

On the other hand, this law establishes the safety requirements a toy must fulfill. These are related to physical and mechanical characteristics, inflammability, chemical and electrical properties and radioactivity.

Finally, we can find the warning that must appear on the toys or their packaging.

- The common sense: some toys are not included in the classroom because they can have dangerous filling or shape. On the other hand, we need to know some information about the children group in order to choose the most appropriate toys for them.
- Ethics: teachers should promote ethic values in the classroom. Thus, toys that promote violence or that discriminate children are not suitable for the school.

5.3. ESAR CLASSIFICATION

In order to organize toys and facilitate children access to them, we can use the ESAR system. It was suggested by Doctor Denise Garon (Canada, 1982). It is based on development features, according to the Piaget's children development theory.

SIDE A: Play activities

It is based on Piaget's play categories. According to them, we distinguish five big groups of play:

1) Exercising play
2) Pretend play
3) Building play
4) Simple rules play
5) Complex rules play

The name ESAR comes from this category (Exercising, Pretend (Symbolic), Building (Assemblage) and Rules.

SIDE B: The cognitive behaviour

It is composed of five categories that are related to the different Piaget stages:

1) Sensory-motor behaviour
2) Symbolic behaviour
3) Intuitive behaviour
4) Concrete operational behaviour
5) Formal operational behaviour

SIDE C: Functional abilities

It refers to the instrumental abilities acquisition. They are:

1) Exploration
2) Imitation.
3) Activity
4) Creation

SIDE D: Social behaviour

The aim of this side is to highlight the possible participation ways in playing.

1) Individual
2) Collective

SUMMARY

- Toys are objects that a child uses in order to develop a play activity.
- We should consider different criteria in order to choose the most appropriate toys for the group we are teaching. These criteria include:
  - The amount of toys in the classroom.
  - Inclusion criteria: pedagogic, recreational, resistance and practicality criteria.
  - Exclusion criteria: the Law, common sense and ethics.
- ESAR system allows us to organise toys in the classroom according to Piaget's theory.

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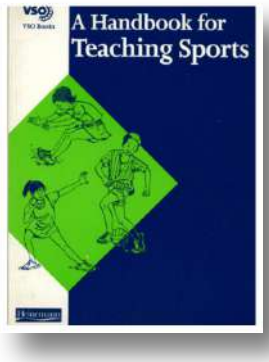
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- **Board games for children:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyuT55s8hJI



- **Board games benefits**: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVMnXUr0Ltg

