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INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN OF PRESCHOOL AGE THROUGH THE BULGARIAN CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE GAMES ⁶

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Abstract: *As a preparatory stage (an inclusive transition) to school, the preschool teacher has to overcome some serious challenges, related to strengthening the physical as well as the mental health of the children. In this complex activity also come the problems, connected to the preparation of the adolescents for the real life- their socialization and adaptation. Here, a particular significance has the work done on diagnostics of development of the cognitive processes, which form the basis of personal development. The game activity provokes the interest to the successful acquiring of new knowledge and consolidation of old knowledge; it also provides the learning of new skills, competences and habits, related to the full development of the children. In relation to the communication, education and to the formation of a child's personality we more often asking the questions: What would effectively help? Are we searching at the right place? Where is the key? Is it time to turn to our "roots" because as the people say: "A tree without roots cannot live!"?!*

The Bulgarian children's folklore games are a part of the cultural national (the so-called non-material) heritage and wealth of our nation. Some of the games like for example The King-The Portal, Pots and Tag are also present in Russia, Turkey, the Czech Republic, Ukraine and Moldova. In the different countries the games have different names and slightly different rules. We can observe a trend for the return of those games in the active part of the children's lives (in the work of the preschool teacher) due to the fact that they develop certain not only motor skills but also mental constructs in a psychological-pedagogical aspect.

Keywords: Bulgarian children's folklore games, Self-identification, Socialization, Preschool age.

INTRODUCTION

In the universal, global plan, a typical feature of education is the continuity and integration between the past, present and future. The past accumulates experience and ideas, the present gives meaning to them, uses and interprets them and, in this way, it creates preconditions for progress in the future.

The current educational process, in all its actuality, can be viewed as an intermediate unit in the universal path of the education as a social phenomenon. It "peers" into the past to find the rational and the meaningful, to improve it and to provide it to the future in a more rational way. The appearance of the education of the generation today depends to a certain degree on the relationship between the present and the past educational process. (Neminska, R.2020, Stefanova, Evd. 2014). When this relationship does not exist, when the meaningful and logical integration of the present with the future is broken, then the effectiveness of the educational interactions in the actual educational environment "suffers".

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To fulfill its purpose, the nowadays education has to be familiar with, to apply and to enrich the experience and the successes of the education of the past.

Why exactly the Bulgarian children's folklore games? Which makes them so important, significant, up-to-date, entertaining, interactive, more special compared to the other types of games-story-role play games, constructive-technical, didactic games, for example?

The answer to these questions is comprehensive, extensive, occupying in countless areas of the scientific world such as didactics, pedagogy, andragogics, psychology, medicine, local history, mystique, physical culture and sports (physical activity), music, creativity, nature (ecology), history, ethnography, folklore and others.

EXPOSITION

The child acquires opportunities for participation in the creative game on the border between early childhood and preschool age. During the second half of the preschool period this activity becomes primary- leading, creating the most favorable conditions for personal development. On its status and importance, the game activity takes fundamental place. This process is socially conditioned, because in the game the child reflects its social experience in a summarized way.

The folklore games are characterized by their emotional saturation and by their functional load. They enrich the thought processes and are means for the development of physical skills, for fostering creative thinking and a number of moral-volitional qualities- mutual help, friendly relations, honesty, responsibility, strong will and others.

The examination of the conceptual paradigm of the *Self-identification* and of the *mental processes* (perception, attention, thinking and imagination) in preschool age (5-7 years old) are connected, measurable with the game activity as a whole and are situated on the: "Child's entering kindergarten and its inclusion in a group together with other children of the same age change the social situation of its development. Up to this moment it is determined by the "child-adult" relationship. Now, the relationship "child-child" is also added to the situation. This leads to a change of the whole relationship system of the child towards the outside world and towards itself. In the kindergarten group on the initiative of the children and on a voluntary basis sustainable child union are formed, and also possibilities for the independent establishment and regulation of relationships between equal partners are created. The children are confronted with the need to assess and compare their behavior with the behavior of others, to observe social norms and to test different strategies for interaction. The inclusion of boys and girls in a group provides different role models, which carry the features of the opposite-sex behavior. These models have a particular, specific importance as they belong to children of the same age, in other words, they are emotionally more significant and accessible to the children. In such a way the child group becomes an important social mediator, through which the child transfers and enriches the mastered in the family stereotypes of gender-role behavior, participating in specific game and real-life relations" (Vitanova, N. 2006).

The *Self-identification*: In the English language the word "I" is always written with a capital letter! This is a spelling rule but when considering this it is possible to find another context. The "Self" is a unique personality separated from the others, from the group. The "Self" is a personal identity of the individual. The "Self" can be seen both in individual and in group manifestations, in order to stand out from the rest (to fit in with the others) or to depersonalize from the others. Namely due to the fact that the game is a group activity, through it the whole arsenal of the interaction and relationship of the child with the environment can be examined, starting from the child's level of adaptation in the group, strategies for conflict resolution, leadership qualities, its communication skills, aggressive tendencies, the level of speech development, the development of the perception sphere, development of symbolic thinking in relation to the roles of "Who (what) am I?" and "Who (what) I would like to be in the future?" gives the opportunity to examine the child's self-evaluation... and many other things. When it comes to the game (the game culture) V. Gyurova

introduce the term a “phenomenon”: “The game culture as a complex phenomenon is connected to the rationalization of one’s own existence “Who am I”, “What would I like to become”, “Who would I like to be”. The answer to these questions comes with the creation of a world without compulsion, without intent, without a scheme. In this personal creative act, through the phenomenon game culture and its concrete manifestations, mutual compliance and accident, social and communicative behavior of the child in ethnical, emotional-volitional and cognitive spheres of culture” (Gurova, V. 2000, p.43). In the game of the child there is a very strong psychoanalytical element, in other words in the game the child projects its inner “Self”. The things that the child cannot express in an official manner, it expresses through the game. Through it the child could unconsciously extract and express emotions that it cannot deal with, that suppress and frighten it. Through the choice of different roles, the child will present itself as it is not, but as it wishes to be.

The life of each person represents a series of endless discoveries, related to receiving, processing and transmission of new knowledge about oneself and the world around. The processes of self-awareness and self-evaluation are built on the basis of comparison with the others. The “Self”-conception is a subject analyzed in modern scientific developments of our and foreign scientists. It is exposed briefly here. The need of its clarification is necessary in order to answer the question “Why, what is the function of the self-awareness of the subject?” Otherwise, it is impossible on the empirical level to search for the relation between these phenomena in their most common staging, without considering the level of their concretization and specificity. The self-awareness motivates the activity (in order to obtain a result, activities are required), participates in the choice of purposes and means for the satisfaction of a need (for example, the small child tests different options- the girls are fluttering with their eyes in order to get the desired thing: “Petyo, give me that toy... and Petyo gives her the toy, can he resist?!”) The self-awareness also provides the self-control (“If I keep hiding behind the pillar/tree, they will not be able to find me and in this way, I will be the winner”, when it comes to the *Hide and seek* game, for example.) It also determines the interpretation of one’s own experience and the perception of the others (the older boys are better than me at the “*Chilik*” game because they are bigger). Furthermore, it appears to be a significant source of our expectations (but I will also become like them, I will grow up and become better at the game/s). The self-awareness maintains the inner unity and coherence, organizes the mechanisms for defense of the personality from the traumatizing experiences. It also actively affects the imagination (I can and I do imagine myself as a “guard” and as a “thief”) and the freedom of the actions (I can also do this). According to R. Stamatov the “Self”-conception is expressed through the attitudes that the child has towards itself. The “Self”-conception is a complex formation, which includes cognitive, emotional and behavioral components. The “Self”-conception is developed through the processes of self-awareness and self-evaluation” (Stoimcheva – Kolarska, D. 2020).

It is important to underline that in the present research the personality of the child is considered that basic system, in which the self-awareness as a process (together with its products) as well as the individual, personal, creative and cognitive abilities appear its leading structural elements. The genetic perspective, which extends the principle of development on the ontogeny, overcomes the functionalism and mechanism and gives the opportunity to track the mental transformations and innovations, starting from the genesis of mental structures. (LiqaaHabeab Al-Obaydi&Fatima Raheem Al-Mosawi 2019, Minchev, P. 2020). Their functional ensembles do not only have separate functions for the adaptation of the child to the reality, but they are also at the basis of the activity, the transformer of the objective environment, the engine of mental development. From this perspective Valon justifies the thesis of ontogeny as a constant autonomy gaining of the personality. This process is organized through the interaction of the developing child with the surrounding people, its differentiating from them and the discovery of one’s “Self” (DonchevaJ. 2014).

Mental processes:In the different age periods of the child different mental processes are most actively and consistently being developed- in the infancy period (from birth to the age of 1 year) the

senses are developed; in the early age (from 1 to 3 years of age) the development of the speech is fostered; in the preschool period (between 3 and 7 years of age) the perception and memory are rapidly developed; and during primary school age (from 7 to 11 years of age) the thinking is developed. The inclusion of games and exercises for the development of the cognitive processes and the speech in the learning process supports not only the mental development, but also reconstructs the motor skills, provides speed, rationalized remembering and reproduction of motor skills, skills for independent decision-making and activity in the conditions of a rapidly changing surrounding environment. *From the Bulgarian children's folklore games such can be: "Me, the left leg...", "My body", "Without a chair", "Giants and dwarfs", "The hen with the chicks", "Cat and mouse" and many others.*

Perceptual processes- sense and perception: The perceptual processes⁷ are generated by the sensory organs- vision, hearing, touch, smell and others. Thanks to these processes the person discovers the panorama of the surrounding world with all its splendor of phenomena and features- sounds, scents, flavors, colors, forms and temperature characteristics. (Borisova, T. 2012, Jordanov, V. 2020, Legurska, M. 2012). Properties of the perception are: rationalization, generality, objectiveness, integrity, specific structure, selectivity, constancy. The perception has a leading role in the cognitive processes during the preschool age. Its formation ensures and guarantees the successful generation of new knowledge, speed in absorbing new information, adaptation to a new environment, full physical and mental development. In this direction, some of the Bulgarian children's folklore games can be successfully applied: "I have", "A mouse boiled porridge", "Cheerful child", "Grandma give me fire", "Chicken", "Question mark", "Snowman", "Pictures in the snow" and many others. *The formation and the dynamics in the development of the specialized perception ensure the combination of the ideomotorics and the psychophysics in the games.*

Attention: The attention is a mental process which aims at directing and focusing the mind on a particular object while simultaneously distracting the mind from other objects. When it comes to the other mental processes the attention plays the role of an organizer. (Angelova, Sv. 2020, Bideleva- Dohneva, R.2020, Jiménez, Clotilde Lechuga2018). It is included in all cognitive processes. *This process can successfully be supported by the following Bulgarian children's folklore games: "Giants and dwarfs", "Without a chair", "Burn, burn towel", "Pots", "Tag", "Where is Mishe's shoe?", "I am observant" and others.*

Interests: In the beginning of the preschool age the attention of the child reflects its interest towards the surrounding objects and the performed activities. The main changes that occur in the attention are expressed in the fact that for the first time the child begins to direct the mind, to direct it to particular objects. (Pavlov, D. 2018, Antonova, D., Pavlov, D. 2008, Ivanova, E.2019). It should be considered that in itself the development of the involuntary attention does not lead to the emergence of the voluntary attention. *The latter is formed because of the targeted guidance of the adults, with the help of verbal instructions and reminders, as well as with the use of visual aids which help the child to focus. In this regard with developing functions the following Bulgarian children's folklore games can be used: "Horse", "Doll", "My body", "My finger", "We are going on a tour", "Footsteps in the snow" (or "Trackers"), "The clever mouse" (or "Grandma and the Mouse") and others.*

Memory: Everything that we experience, everything that we see, hear, say, sense and feel can be stored for a long time in our memory. During the period of the preschool age the memory develops and becomes a process with dominant functions. Precisely at this age the children begin to be active in the field of sports activities (gymnastics, acrobatics, figure skating and dancing) (According to Ivanova, V. 2009, Popeska, Biljana and Sivevska, Despina, 2015). *The Bulgarian*

⁷From Latin *perceptia*- sensory perception.

children's folklore games that successfully foster the development of the memory are: "I have", "I have two hands", "Me, the left leg", "Rope", "Twice at the left", "and Fingers", "When we were...", "Winnie the Gymnast", "Question mark", "Hands" and many others.

Thinking: The thinking is the most important process of the cognition. Through the help of the thinking we receive knowledge that we cannot obtain with the help of the sensory organs. The thinking correlates the data received by the senses and the perception, compares them, differentiates them and reveals relationships between the phenomena surrounding us even when they are not physically present. (Velikova, M.2015, Topolska, Evg. 2020). The main type of thinking that the child has during the preschool age is the visual-figurative thinking, while during the period 6-7 years of age the child begins to form the so-called verbal-logical thinking. Thanks to it the child is able to silently "replay" real actions. *The games such as "Pretend", "Without a chair", "Tag", "Freezing" and many others, in which the child plays a specific role determined by the story is exactly a product of this process of the thinking.*

Imagination: Thanks to the imagination a person can mentally imagine things that he/she has never even perceived. In the period between 5-6 years of age the child develops special sensitivity of the imagination. This is the transition from the involuntary memorizing and reproducing to the voluntary. (Voinohovska, V., 2020, Stoiyanova, M. 2019). Namely this represents the basis for the development of the creative imagination which provides the opportunity to create new images. *The creative imagination of the child occurs mainly in the subject matter role play, moving, folklore games, such as for example: "The windmill", "A truck was driving...", "Grandma, give me light", "Grandma glossed over", "Fly, fly crow" and many others which create space for improvisation.*

CONCLUSION

Another thing which is of an utmost importance is that the Bulgarian children's folklore games could be and are successfully used in the methods, the complex means for correctional-educational work (correction, compensation, rehabilitation) and also, they can be used with abnormal children. Practically-indicative with a high percentage of sustainable trend are the applications, the work with children with antisocial, anomalous, deviant behavior and all kinds of problems from the spectrum of the special pedagogy. They are used as a preventative and correctional tool when working with children with special educational needs starting from the preschool age across the whole continuum. (Zlatarov, P., G. Ivanova, 2018, Valchev, K.,2017). Furthermore, they can be very successfully used in a multicultural environment for the socialization, adaptation, development of speech-communication skills of the bilingual children.

Through the games new aspects are unfolded, unused capabilities of the child personal potential are revealed, social and moral development, imagination, creativity, cognitive perception and learning, activity in all its aspects- cognitive, intellectual, motor, emotional and others. The games also foster the empathic attitude, reflection, assessment of the other, emotional satisfaction, and last but not least, a healthy way of living connected not only with what and how we eat, but also with how physically active we are. As mature and wise people, as parents and teachers, it is always good to have in mind what kind of example we give to the future generations. What do we bequeath, what spiritual inheritance do we leave to them, how do we preserve and transmit our national values such as the traditions, customs, lifestyle, culture, health?!(Stepashkina, V. A. 2017, Rahim, Fatima2018).

I challenge my colleagues from the Balkan nations to join our efforts, to compare between ourselves the children's folklore games, to preserve and disseminate our priceless non-material cultural heritage and wealth in order to give it to the present and to the future children, to THE GENERATION WITHOUT LIMITS.

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