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# Towards a New Creative pedagogy for Primary School Pupils -Play Pedagogy as a Model-

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# Towards a New Creative pedagogy for Primary School Pupils -Play Pedagogy as a Model-

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#### **Abstract:**

In the stages of traditional education, the teacher was the focus of the learning process, as he was the bearer of knowledge, the provider of the learner, and the learner represented a future container of knowledge, in a fundamentally motivational manner.

Modern education has opened up to new active methods based on interaction, developing the learner's skills, and developing their intellectual and cognitive abilities, to prepare a learner capable of thinking and creativity to solve problems, as well as the ability to produce and interpret knowledge in different situations.

This modern educational orientation has motivated the teacher to create a new educational scandal on which modern education depends, including: the adoption of creative or performing arts in active learning (drawing, shaping, music, singing .. Etc.) This is in order to contribute to changing the fixed stereotype of the educational process and the culture of scientific research. In this article, we try to look for ways to promote education and open it to new and contemporary approaches. We will focus on the pedagogy of play among primary school students.

#### Keywords:

Play Pedagogy, Educational process, Primary School, Teacher, Learner.

#### **Prologue**

Interest in the application of play pedagogy as a productive strategy for creativity (Serious Game), motivating the learner to participate effectively in the educational process, and as a way that the scientific bodies that produce school programs have bet on in order to expand the circle of knowledge from within educational institutions and educational centers - formal institutional education directed - outside institutions - the family, society, the child's surroundings - to make him able to employ his knowledge and skills in similar situations outside school.

The educational process that relies on the pedagogy of creativity is not easy to implement or prepare due to the goals expected to be achieved. Therefore, the mechanisms of induction, prediction,

diagnosis and foresight must be activated, and this makes it a transdisciplinary process, as this item allows taking into account the individual differences between learners, discovering their tendencies and desires, and developing a practical roadmap from the beginning.

In this article, we will try - as hard as possible - to shed light on the creative pedagogy industry in the primary stage, and the goals achieved by this approach, taking this article to approach the pedagogy of play as it is inherent to the child at this stage of his life, and the article at the beginning simplifies an important question: Does the adoption of the pedagogy of play as an educational basis contribute to the development of the learner's abilities?

Or/ Is creating educational content based on guided play capable of making a committed student - a model -?

In order to reach convincing answers to the question, we will stop at the following main points:

First: The concept of the pedagogy of play:

Second: Theories of Play Pedagogy:

Third: Principles of Play Pedagogy:

These stations will be keys to enlighten us to achieve the purpose, with a serious attempt from us to provide an educational model, explain it, simplify its educational content, and clarify its goals and objectives towards the child of the primary education stage, which is the practical position through which we enhance the answer to the questions of this study and justify them, and this paper will be a reference for every teacher who moves towards this active and effective educational approach.

#### First: The concept of the pedagogy of play:

Play pedagogy is the thinking of transforming play from an innate behavior in a child's life to a guided play based on a set of learning, from which the student acquires a set of useful skills, and it is also "harnessing play to serve the learner and not depriving him of it because good learning is coupled with desire and pleasure to meet the learner's needs: sense/ mobility, psychological/ social..etc."

### Isenberg, Joan P., and Quisenberry, Nancy L. (2002). Play: A Critical Link in Early Childhood Education. P43.

It is an activity practiced by the child without pressure from the environment and the environment. Pedagogical play is purposefully built by adopting scenarios to bring about learning and the development of skills, values and intelligence, invading classrooms to stimulate the pleasure of learning, and stimulate movement and activity. The pedagogy of play is not an end, but rather a means to achieve learning (educational goal), and this approach is based on educational and psychological theories, where *Jean Piaget* points out that "playing is not just a recreational activity, but rather a means to improve the life of the child."

#### Idib.p44.

Play pedagogy is one of the effective and successful educational approaches with primary school children, because it integrates play into the educational process to achieve a balance between: education in a fun way and play as an innate behavior that helps them learn oriented and helps to develop the ability of thinking, creativity and collective cooperation. Lev Vygotsky believes that "play provides a supportive environment for the development of social skills and stimulating self-learning". Vygotsky.,L Thinking and Language, Academic Publishing House, Rossi, 1962, p. 112.

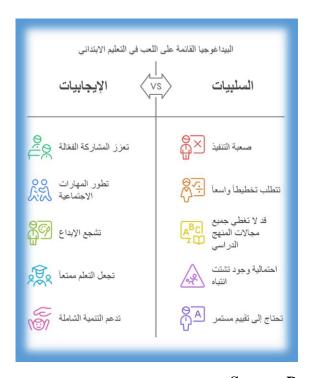
Play pedagogy is an innovative ducational methodology, which aims to transform the learning process into an exciting experience for students. Instead of relying on traditional methods of learning, play pedagogy seeks to integrate play and interactive activities in the classroom in a way

that attracts and desires the learner in school, which promotes the active participation of students and encourages them to integrate and cooperate collectively. "The roots of this approach go back to learning theories that emphasize the importance of play in children's growth and cognitive development, and interest in this approach began in the early 20th century, as educators and scientists realized the importance of play in the learning process."

## Brown, Stuart, and Vaughan, Christopher. (2009). Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul. Avery, United States.p87.

This madescientists and specialists look at it scientifically and formulate their pedagogical theories, as follows:

Figure 1/ Represents the pros and cons of adopting play pedagogy in education:



**Source: Prepared by researchers** 

<u>Comment on Figure 1:</u> The pedagogy of play, despite its lack of positives on which modern education is betting, as summarized on the left of this figure, including: promoting collective cooperation and integration between learners, developing the various skills of learners, encouraging creativity, making learning fun..) It has drawbacks that make the learner make a great effort to achieve the cognitive goal based on learning. Among the drawbacks that we referred to in the right of **Figure 1**: (The difficulty of implementing this approach requires extensive planning, it works on some parts of the curriculum and does not fit on some axes of the curriculum, its focus is on continuous evaluation..)

<u>Second: Chronology of the theories of play pedagogy:</u> In this part, we present the theories of play pedagogy according to the history of their emergence and development, focusing on the most important foundations on which each theory is based.

#### a) Behavioral Theory:

The behavioralschoolis one ofthemost important psychological currents that affected educational psychology, asit focuses on the study of observable and measurable behavior, ignoring invisible mental processes. For behaviorists, learning is the process of forming conditional responses as a result

of environmental stimuli, which makes it applicable in the fields of education and teaching, including pedagogical play.

Behaviorism emerged in the early 20th century thanks to the work of **John Watson**, who asserted that learning is a process of forming correlations between stimuli and responses, based on **Ivan Pavlov's** studies of "conditioned response." Later, Burhouse **Frederick Skinner** developed this concept through the theory of "operant conditioning" **Skinner**, **b. F.** *Behavioral Learning*, **Educational Publishing**, **New York**, **1954**, **p. 75**, which asserts that behavior is reinforced through rewards and punishments.

#### Pedagogical play in light of behavioral theory:

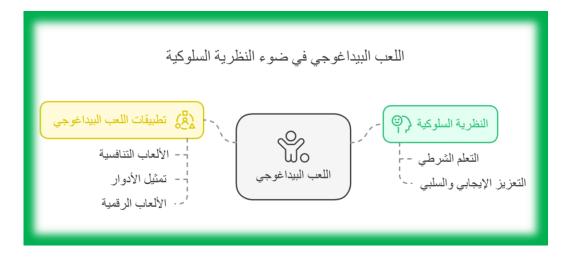
Behavioral theory holds that learning throughplay occurs when behaviors are associated with positive or negative reinforcement, and accordingly, "teachers can design game activities that encourage the acquisition of new skills by applying the principles of conditionallearning, for example, when using educational games that give points or rewards for correct answers to increase the likelihood of repeating correct responses in the future."

Miller, Edward, and Almon, J. (2009). Crisis in the Kindergarten: Why Children Need to Play in School. Alliance for Childhood, United States.p76.

#### Pedagogical play applications from a behavioral perspective:

- 1. **Competitive games:** Motivate students to actively participate by offering rewards for each achievement, which promotes positive behavior.
- 2. **Role play:** Used to teach social behaviors, where desired actions are reinforced by positive feedback.
- 3. **Digital gaming:** Provides an interactive learning environment based on continuous motivation via reward points or corrective sanctions.

Figure 2: Behavioral Theory Strategy in Pedagogical Play



**Source: Prepared by researchers** 

<u>Commenting on Figure 2:</u> Behavioral theory has succeeded in promoting learning with this pedagogy by enticing the learned child with punishment, intimidating him when he fails with punishment, and expanding the circle of learning actions and activities, but it has made the act of learning more mechanical than motivational and fun in line with desire and curiosity.

#### **B)** TheoryofCognitive Development:

Developed by Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, it is one of the most prominent theories on how thinking and understanding develops in children. This theory focuses on specific stages that the child goes through, as the pattern of thinking and perception changes with age.

#### Piaget's stages of cognitive development:

- 1. **Sensory-motor stage (birth to 2 years of age):** At this stage, the child learns through direct interaction with the environment using senses and movement. He begins to understand the concept of eddyism and develops coordination skills between senses and actions.
- 2. **Preoperative stage (2-7 years): Symbolic thinking begins to** emerge, where the child uses words and images to represent objects. However, thinking remains subjective and self-centered, with difficulty seeing the perspectives of others.
- 3. Concrete operations phase (7-11 years): Thinking becomes more logical and structured, with the ability to perform mental operations on tangible objects. The child acquires the concept of reflection (understanding that some processes can be reversed) and begins to understand concepts such as number and mass.
- 4. Formal operations stage (12 years and older): The individual is able to think abstractly and logically, with the ability to test hypotheses and think about future possibilities, Piaget, Jean. *Mental formation in the child.* Translated by: Muhammad Imad al-Din Ismail, Dar al-Ma 'arif, Egypt, 1976, p. 78.

#### Applications of pedagogical play in light of Piaget's theory:

Piaget sees play as an essential means of learning, as it allows children to explore the environment and build knowledge through active interaction. The type of play and its objectives vary depending on the cognitive stage that the child is going through:

- **Sensory-motor: The** child benefits from toys that encourage sensory and motor interaction, such as toys that make sounds or move when touched.
- **Preoperational:** The child enjoys imaginative and acting games, such as role-playing and puppet use, which helps him develop symbolic thinking skills.
- **In the concrete operations stage:** The child benefits from educational games that require logical thinking and problem solving, such as puzzles and games that require classifying and arranging objects.
- In the formative operations stage: The adolescent enjoys games that require strategic thinking and planning, such as complex board games and games that require solving complex problems.

By designing play activities that fit the cognitive stage of the child, educators can promote learning and develop thinking skills in ways that align with the child's abilities and interests.

Piaget, Jean. Play, dreams, and imitation in childhood. Translation: Nazmi Luqa, Dar Al-Maaref, Egypt, 1976,pp. 95-112.

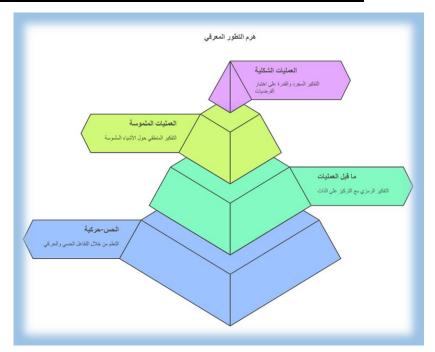


Figure 3/ The pyramid represents the child's cognitive development:

**Source: Prepared by researchers** 

<u>Comment on Figure 3:</u> Cognitive theory in the adoption of play pedagogy took into account the child's age, cognitive and emotional development, focusing on the skills acquired at each age and on this basis building successful and effective learning.

#### C) Social LearningTheory:

Developed by Canadian psychologist **Albert Bandura**, it is a prominent theory in the field of educational psychology. This theory focuses on how individuals acquire new behaviors and skills through observation and imitation, emphasizing the role of social factors in the learning process.

#### **Key concepts in social learning theory:**

- 1. **Observational learning:** Refers to the ability of individuals to learn new behaviors by watching models (other people) perform those behaviors. This concept highlights the importance of the social environment in shaping an individual's behavior.
- 2. **Modeling:** The process of providing a model of desired behavior, where the individual observes this model and then imitates it. Models can be live (real people) or symbolic (media figures)

Bodrova, Elena, and Leong, Deborah J. (2003). Tools of the Mind: The Vygotskian Approach to Early Childhood Education. Pearson, United States.p203.

**3 Self-enhancement:** Refers to an individual's ability to reward or punish themselves based on their rating of their performance, which reinforces desirable behaviors and reduces undesirables.

**Educational applications of social learning theory in pedagogical play:** 

"The principles of social learning theory are applied in the educational field by integrating them into pedagogical play activities" This is done through.

# Smith, Peter K. (2011). Children and Play: Understanding Children's Worlds. Wiley-Blackwell, United Kingdom.p232.

**Role play:** allows students to assume different personalities, helping them understand other people's perspectives and develop social communication skills.

**Group learning games:** Encourage collaboration and constructive competition, as students learn from each other through observation and interaction.

#### Friedrich Fröbel and the theory of social activity:

**Friedrich Froebel** (1782-1852) was one of the first theorists to focus on the role of **play in learning**, as he is considered the founder of modern kindergartens.

Froebel considered play to be the child's primary activity and the natural way in which children learn.

He also focused on the concept of 'Gifts and Occupations', which are tools and activities designed to help children develop their cognitive and social skills.

#### Froebel, Friedrich. The Education of Man. Appleton, USA, 1885, p. 112.

Maria Montessori (1870-1952): Italian physician and educator, who developed an educational curriculum focused on the holistic development of the child, including social and emotional aspects. Although Montessori did not offer a specific theory called "social-emotional development theory," her approach includes principles that support this aspect of a child's development.

#### **Montessori Principles in Social and Emotional Development:**

- 1. **Self-learning:** The Montessori curriculum encourages children to learn through exploration and self-experience, which promotes self-confidence and independence.
- 2. **Stimulating environment:** The Montessori environment provides carefully designed learning materials that allow children to learn at their own pace, supporting emotional and social development.
- 3. **Social interaction:** Classes are structured to include different ages, encouraging children to interact and collaborate, thereby developing social skills.
- 4. **Teacher role:** The teacher acts as a mentor, observing and providing support when needed, allowing children to develop their social and emotional skills in a supportive environment.

# Frost, Joe L., Wortham, Susan C., and Reifel, Stuart. 2012 Play and Child Development. Pearson, United States.p231.

#### Pedagogical play in the Montessori curriculum:

In the Montessori curriculum, "play" is an essential part of the learning process. Practical activities and specially designed learning materials are used to encourage children to learn through experience and discovery. This approach enables children to develop their fine motor skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving ability, as well as fostering social and emotional development.

- Play is a way to develop independence and self-awareness.
- Play contributes to the development of critical and creative thinking in children.
- Educational environments must be geared to the development of play, which promotes social interaction and emotional growth".

### Montessori, Maria. The assimilated mind. Publishing House: Dar Al-Fikr, State: Lebanon, Year: 2005, Page: 45.

Through these principles, the Montessori curriculum seeks to support children's social and emotional development, enabling them to grow in an inclusive and integrated learning environment.

The Montessori educational method is based on the stages of development that children go through as they grow. These stages are identity, bonding, coordination, fine motor skills, gross motor skills, and socialization. Each stage focuses on teaching a specific skill set, while fostering a sense of independence and connectedness.

Identity development focuses on learning to create an individual identity. During this stage, children learn to develop a sense of self-awareness and learn to understand their strengths and weaknesses.

Interdependence development teaches children how to build strong relationships with others. They learn how to share and take care of things together, trusting their instincts.

#### Figure 4/ Represents teaching and learning strategies:



استراتيجيات التعليم والتطور

**Source: Prepared by researchers** 

<u>Comment on Figure 4:</u> We note that the department built learning from the Montessori perspective on the integration of many factors, and each tool complements the other and contributes to the development of learning skills for the learner (building relationships between learners, self-development and self-confidence, social interaction.), so we alert learners to focus on them, taking into account the individual differences between learners and the environment from which they come.

#### d) Vygotsky's pedagogical play:

Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) was a Soviet psychologist and the founder of sociocultural theory, which focuses on the importance of social and cultural interaction in the development of human cognition. This theory suggests that learning is a social process that is influenced by the cultural and historical context in which an individual lives.

#### Key Concepts in Vygotsky's Theory:

- 1. **Social interaction:** Interacting with others, especially with more experienced individuals, is key to developing skills and knowledge. Through this interaction, individuals acquire the tools to think and solve problems.
- 2. **Cultural tools:** Includes language, symbols, and physical tools provided by culture, which are used as media in the process of learning and thinking.
- 3. **Zone of proximal growth (ZPD):** refers to the distance between what an individual can do on their own and what they can do with the help of a more experienced person. This area defines the educational potential of an individual.

#### Pedagogical play from Vygotsky's perspective:

Play is based on a vital element in the development of a child's life according to Vygotsky. Through play, children are able to:

- Developing social skills: by interacting with their peers and learning different social roles.
- Language development and thinking: through the use of language in diverse contexts and the development of imaginative abilities.
- Explore the Near Growth Zone: They face challenges beyond their current capabilities but can overcome them with little help, which promotes learning and development.

### Vygotsky, Lev. *Thinking and Language*. Publishing House: Institute of Human Relations, Country: USA, Year: 1962, Page: 100.

Through these concepts, Vygotsky highlights the importance of the social and cultural environment in shaping the learning process, and shows how play can be an effective way to promote children's cognitive and social development. Vygotsky divided speech in a child into three steps:

- -Social Speech
- Self-centered speech.
- Inner speech (thinking).

Therefore, the process of building knowledge according to his theory comes first through the learner's social interaction with another person who is more knowledgeable, and then self-constructed as an individual activity. In classrooms, social discussion and negotiation between the teacher and students and between students takes place together as a sociocultural process to guide the child's thinking.

#### Figure 5/Reinforcing learning through observation, modeling and play:



#### **Source: Prepared by researchers**

<u>Commenting on Figure 5:</u> Learning according to the above figure is based on taking into account the learner's mental perceptions. Some learners learn by observation -a photographic memory in memorization - and some of them need self-reinforcement and motivation in learning by encouraging, accompanying and caring for them, and some of them learn by imitating some of the behaviors they find in their peers.

#### **III) Principles of Play Pedagogy:**

The pedagogy of play is based on basic principles, namely:

Learning through play: Play is an effective way to learn new concepts and skills. It gives students the opportunity to explore the world around them, gaining knowledge through trial and error. This principle enhances critical and creative thinking skills, as students learn how to solve problems and make decisions. As it helps develop communication and collaboration skills, students learn how to work in a team and achieve common goals.

Experiential Learning: This principle encourages students to learn through direct experience. Rather than passively receiving information, students actively participate in the learning process.

This approach develops critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as students learn through trial and error, which enhances their ability to think independently. It also enhances communication and collaboration skills, as students learn how to communicate effectively with their peers and teachers.

Exploration-based learning: This principle allows students to explore concepts and ideas on their own. Through exploration, students develop research and analytical skills. This approach encourages students to ask questions and explore answers, which enhances their critical and creative thinking skills. It also helps to develop problem-solving skills, as students learn how to deal with complex situations and find innovative solutions.

Collaborative Learning: Play pedagogy encourages collaboration among students, which enhances teamwork and communication skills. By working together in playful activities, "students learn how to collaborate and solve problems collectively. This principle enhances communication and cooperation skills, as students learn how to communicate effectively with their peers, and develop their skills in working in a team."

Pellegrini, Anthony D., and Smith, Peter K. (1998). The Nature of Play: Great Apes and Humans. Guilford Press, United States.p94. Benefits of Play Pedagogy:

Play pedagogy has many educationalbenefits, including:

"Enhancing Cognitive Skills": Playful activities help develop students' critical and creative thinking skills. Through play, students learn how to analyze information and make decisions. This approach enhances students' ability to think independently and creatively, contributing to the development of their cognitive skills. It also helps to improve problem-solving skills, as students learn how to think logically and find innovative solutions.

# Hughes, Claire. (2009). The Roots of Play: Play as a Tool for Learning and Development. Routledge, United Kingdom.p85.

Improving communication skills: By participating in play activities, students learn to communicate effectively with their peers and teachers. Social interaction during play enhances verbal and non-verbal communication skills. This principle helps students develop their verbal and non-verbal communication skills, which enhances their ability to express their thoughts and feelings. It also enhances active listening skills, as students learn how to listen and interact with others.

Developing critical thinking: Play pedagogy encourages students to think critically and analytically. By asking questions and exploring ideas, students develop critical thinking skills and gain the ability to evaluate information. This approach enhances students' critical analysis skills, helping them make informed decisions and form evidence-based opinions. It also helps develop creative thinking skills, as students learn how to think outside the box and find innovative solutions.

Improving problem-solving skills: Playful activities give students the opportunity to face challenges and solve problems. Through play, "students learn how to think creatively and find innovative solutions. This principle enhances students' problem-solving skills, as they learn how to deal with complex situations and find innovative solutions to them. It also helps to develop strategic thinking skills"

### Elkind, David. (2007). The Power of Play: Learning What Comes Naturally. Da Capo Lifelong Books, United States.p62.

Students also learn how to develop plans and strategies to solve problems.

Social and Emotional Skills Enhancement: Play contributes to the development of students' social and emotional skills. Through interaction with peers, "students learn to cooperate and empathize. Play also helps build self-confidence and boost self-esteem. This approach enhances students' social and emotional skills, as they learn how to communicate and deal with others, and develop their skills in managing emotions."

## Vygotsky, Lev S. (1978). Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes. Harvard University Press, United States.p192.

It also helps foster empathy and cooperation, as students learn how to understand and deal with the feelings of others.

Challenges and recommendations:

Teachers face some challenges when applying play pedagogy, such as:

Need to plan and design appropriate play activities: Incorporating play pedagogy into the classroom requires careful planning and design of play activities that are commensurate with educational goals. This requires teachers to put extra effort into researching appropriate activities and adapting them to students' needs.

Classroom management: Teachers may face a challenge in classroom management during playful activities, especially if not adequately prepared and trained. This requires teachers to acquire classroom management skills during playful activities, and to learn how to deal with different situations.

Provide resources and support: Teachers may need additional resources, such as educational toys or technology tools, to effectively apply play pedagogy. They may also need support from the administration and the educational institution. This requires the provision of the necessary resources and support to teachers, to ensure the success of the application of play pedagogy.

Suggested recommendations to overcome these challenges include:

Adequate teacher training: Ongoing professional training should be provided to teachers on how to incorporate play pedagogy into the classroom. Through training, teachers can acquire the skills needed to design and implement effective play activities. This helps teachers better understand and apply the principles of play pedagogy.

Encouragecollaboration and brainstorming: Teachers can be encouraged to collaborate and brainstorm aboutsuccessful play activities. By sharing experiences and expertise, teachers candraw on each other and developtheir learning practices. This promotes cooperation between teachers and encourages the exchange of creative ideas.

Providing thenecessary resources and support: Educational institutions must provide thenecessary resources and support to effectively implement playpedagogy. By providing educational games and technological tools, teachers can create arich and enjoyable learning environment. This helps to provide teachers with the necessary tools, and encourages them to use play pedagogy in classrooms.

#### Figure 6/An illustrative summary of the study recommendations:



Source: Prepared by researchers

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