Abstract

The paper presents a practical-applied research which investigates the benefits of art therapy on preschool children; how they can be supported to evolve in a desirable way, from a cognitive, affective and psychomotor perspective. The purpose of our research was the pedagogical investigation of art therapy in the formative influence of preschool children with social and family problems (problems of adaptation to the environment of kindergarten, undesirable behaviors in the group of children, family, but also society). The methods and instruments we used highlighted the projective tests method, observation, the questionnaire, sociometrical methods. We mention that we did not diagnose (psychologically) a child; we didn’t interpret their work as it is usually done with these techniques. Through drawings we identified children with emotional, social integration (children group), communication problems etc., only with the elements of visual language, the colors and space used, details and elements of the environment. By instrumenting – as an independent variable – of an educational program, we tried and we succeeded in the formative influence of children, through artistic education, respectively through curricular materials - drawings - created by preschoolers themselves and used in therapeutic and projective purposes, which helped the children significantly in their efforts of effective social adaptation and integration in the kindergarten.

Keywords: formative influence, aesthetic education, visual language, projective value, therapeutic value

1. Introduction/Problem Statement

Aesthetics is "the science that studies the laws and categories of art, considered the highest form of creation and perception of beauty; set of questions relating to the essence of art, to its relation to reality, to the method of artistic creation, to the criteria and genres of art." [Explanatory Dictionary of Romanian Language1998, p. 348]

Aesthetics is partially identified with the theory of beauty – fundamental category of this philosophical subject, with legitimate status of science. Aesthetics studies the beauty of nature, art and society. Aesthetics
spread from the natural and the art domain in social life. Aesthetics escape from art in the everyday life reduces the monotonous and sometimes unpleasant effects of daily commonplace. Beauty is not only the reflection and artistic feeling mobile, but also of the daily feelings.

The main way which ensures the aesthetic relationship between man and reality is art. Artwork has dual character, holding both a cognitive and a non-cognitive dimension. It covers various specific and nonspecific knowledge - sent on their own way to the artistic knowledge behind the work. Also, the surrounding reality determines in the artist attitudes, feelings and emotions that are expressed, presented in the works of art through the creative process. But the artist represents this reality using various expressive forms, after reality was filtered through his own inner world, his own subjectivity, thought, imagination and personality.

Art has formative valences resulting from the many possibilities of artistic message, discover and reveal the most intimate and deep sides of human sensitivity. Art “responds to real needs that any person feels to clarify certain ideas, to motivate certain behaviors, to substantiate some attitudes by suggesting, explaining, or valuing. By its stimulating, tonic, optimistic nature, art leads to the love of truth, goodness, science and life.” [Salade, D., 1973, p. 17]

2. Purpose of Study

Our practical-applied research investigates and describes the benefits of art therapy on preschool children (beneficiaries of the educational activities), how they can be supported to evolve in a desirable way, form a cognitive, affective and psychomotor perspective. Also, we propose that through our approach, in addition to conclusions based on a rigorous scientific background, to identify and formalize new horizons for pedagogical research circumscribed to this wide issue, as well as new operational issues of investigation. As a purpose for our research, we proposed: pedagogical investigation of art therapy in the formative influence of preschool children with social and family problems (problems of adaptation to the environment of kindergarten, undesirable behaviors in the group of children, family, but also society).

3. Methods

Given that the preschool period is very important in the further development of the individual, we formulated the following general hypothesis: Participation of preschool children to an educational program focused on their formative influence through artistic education, respectively on curricular materials - drawings - created by preschoolers themselves and used in therapeutic and projective purposes, will help the children significantly in their efforts of effective social adaptation and integration in the kindergarten.

Research methods and tools used: questionnaire-based survey, sociometrical methods, projective tests method, observation. Through them we collect information for the various stages of research.

Regarding the issue of content sampling, we mention that the experimental investigation was conducted at level II of preschool children.

Sample content includes: content categories of “Arts Education” activities presented in at “The Curriculum for Preschool Education”: identify and use of elements of visual language, applying color through various techniques (brush, sponge, palm, sole, cork, fabric, stamps etc.), identify primary colors, but subsequently by the binary ones, painting activities using primary/binary color group, organized in the classroom but also outdoor, exercises using arts composition techniques: stamping, melted wax, painting on glass, wood, stones and shells, exercises for obtaining the point through various techniques (splash, template, blowing through a straw), decorative surface treatment using line and spots (straight, oblique line, spiral/flat spot painting), composition of spontaneously and developed form, completion exercises of arts creations (framing, display, exhibitions etc.), analyzing exercises of original arts creations.

Participants sample: 50 preschool children from 493 children.
THE PRE-EXPERIMENTAL STAGE

Our research was conducted to identify preschoolers with behavioral, social, group integration, affectivity problems, presented and manifested in the group of preschoolers and kindergarten curricular environment as well as validation of prevention methods in order to overcome these problems. In the first stage, our research integrated an investigating effort to ascertain nature, from whose data we initiated work strategies to address the complex studied issues.

In our research we chose to use, first, the method of projective tests as well as analysis of artistic products resulting from these tests. We consider it the most important step in collecting the initial data from which we determine the sample of subjects, of course, using other methods, to have a very solid database.

Using these projective tests, we will not diagnose (psychologically) a child; we will not interpret their work as it is usually done with these techniques. We try, through drawings made by children, to identify children who have emotional, social integration (children group), communication problems etc., only with elements of visual language, the colors used, space used etc. The tests used in this stage include: the person test, the family test, the house test, the HTP test (house, tree, and person) and the tree test, followed only in the post-experimental stage by the Davido-Chad test.

Setting the sample of subjects was made after analyzing the results, were selected the children who obtained the lowest scores on projective tests, interacted the least with colleagues, were involved in little or no activity, the opening to colleagues or to the teacher was almost zero. Were taken into account also the sociometric test results, the selected children who were outside the sociogram, children who were not appointed by colleagues, respectively children who were not sufficiently well integrated into the collective they belong.

FORMATIVE STAGE OF THE EXPERIMENT

The formative stage of the research consisted in development of an educational intervention program and in experiencing it on the sample of subjects chosen in the previous step. General sample of preschool children was composed of groups up to 10 children, depending on the number of kindergartens population involved in research.

The program aims to influence in a formative way the preschool children through artistic education, in order to effectively adapt and integrate into society. The intentions are to help children relate better with others, to initiate actions on its own initiative, to more easily express their ideas, opinions, fears, to request and assist colleagues, to develop communication skills and interpersonal relationships. Thus, using art therapy, the child will gain self confidence, will further integrate better into the class, school, community life.

Structural components: 10 sessions of educational activities, respectively individual and group workshops, educational activities circumscribed to the discipline "Art Education".

The program pursued: to unlock and motivate children for group experiences; creating an emotionally secure climate and dissolution of children resistance, allowing to authentic communication; organizing a system of activities to facilitate: installing and promoting authentic and real communication, preschool to preschool and pre-school to teacher, activation and optimization of preschool children creative resources, self-regulation and personal development, optimizing their behavior in groups, promoting cooperation and exercising their empathic capacities.

POST-EXPERIMENTAL STAGE

At the end of the formative stage, post-test was administered, aimed at monitoring comparison progress and changes in the behavior and conduct of preschoolers, to establish conclusions about confirmation or rejection of the experimental assumptions. Thus, during this stage, we applied the following tests: the projective tests – the house test, the family test, the house-tree-person test, the tree test, the person test, but also a new test, Davido-Chad. The first five tests were rated by the same method used in the pre-experimental stage. The last test was performed on other criteria, such as those established by Roseline Davido, thus creating some case studies for each subject in part.
We also used the questionnaire-based survey method, to make a comparison between the answers given before and after the intervention made by applying our educational program. Sociometric test was repeated to see if they have registered stagnation or evolution within the groups of children.

4. Findings

For each method and test used, a rigorous comparative analysis was conducted to see if the children had an evolution or a regression. Using t-test overall, for all projective tests together, we can achieve the following results and the following interpretations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Samples Statistics</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pre</td>
<td>59.92</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>30.078</td>
<td>4.297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post</td>
<td>83.90</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>32.448</td>
<td>4.635</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this table, the first column shows the average, the number of cases and standard deviation for the the two groups. The average for pre-experiment is 59.92 and its standard deviation is 30.078. The average for the post-experiment is 83.90, and the standard deviation is 32.448.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Samples Correlations</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>.913</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second table shows the extent to which the two sets of scores are correlated. The correlation between them is 0.913.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Samples Tests</th>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>pre - post</td>
<td>-23,980</td>
<td>13,220</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third table provides a very high significance level, p < 0.001, t value (-12.697), 49 degrees of freedom and the level of bidirectional significance, 0.000. The unidirectional level is obtained by dividing by 2; it is 0.000 and it is significant.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper aimed to highlight in terms of theoretical, but also practical explanations, some general aspects of the educational process through artistic education, with focus on pre-school education.

After analyzing the results of our research, we can say that the general hypothesis was validated.

Referring to the therapeutical aspect of art, art therapy represents the therapeutic use of artistic creation to improve the emotional status of people who have various communication, integration difficulties etc. Art therapy
workshops offer a place of free and creative expression of emotions, ideas, frustrations, anxieties. Art therapy is a therapeutic process beneficial to people of all ages: children, adolescents, adults and elderly, who may have physical, emotional, spiritual or intellectual difficulties.

Our recommendations relate to educational measures at the macro and micro level, both for the near future, but mostly we want to refer to a long term. We consider this extremely important, especially since we notice that in the social and professional reality we are surrounded by kitsch on all levels. These things will not change, unless we take the necessary measures such as:

- **Courts educational awareness**, of decision makers in education, of teachers, parents and the public, to capitalize the formative valences of this discipline in a much larger perspective, in the context of favorable behavioral influence of the subjects of education (preschool, school, youth and adults) and their support, in the context of training and shaping the human personality of new and modern person, integrated in a complex reality.

- **Inclusion in the curriculum of initial and continuing training** of teacher in Romania, of compulsory and optional disciplines regarding "Art Education" field, designed in a curricular way and conducted in a modern educational and didactical manner, with valuing the aims of motivational, instrumental, cognitive and metacognitive nature of the respective disciplines.

- **Re-elaborating and restructuring the written curriculum**, especially the curricula for all levels of education (currently there are no programs or textbooks for the grade XII and XIII) and "affirmation" of curricular area named "Arts", both on theoretical and practical approach.

- **Organization**, in the context of providing continuing education, of specialized courses and educational activities in this field of art therapy, not only for the preschool, but also for other levels and interested persons: adolescents, various professional groups, persons with disabilities, adults, elderly etc. We need people well trained in this regard, who then work with children in all schools, with youth and adults, complying with specific pedagogical and didactical requirements.

- **Achieving effective management curriculum** in the discipline "Art Education" by capitalizing of modern pedagogical paradigms:
  - Focusing on the student, the subject of the educational activity;
  - Ensuring consistency of intra- and interdisciplinary, intra- and intercurricular;
  - Development of effective teaching strategies in relation to the need to ensure continuity and progress from one class to another, from a curricular cycle to another, from one stage of ontogenetic development to another, in specific skills training.

- **Achieving effective management of contents** in "Art Education" subject, respectively exploiting the formative, informative and instrumental valences of its specific content.

- Although our work refers strictly to the level of preschool education, we motivate our intention for all stages of education: it is not enough to put some artistic bases only at the preschool level without continuity later. Starting with this basis, "construction" of aesthetic taste is carried mainly by high school completion. Thus, opportunities to change the current reality are very large. In this way, what we call culture in this regard is likely to become total: true talents will be valued, artists will be truly valued. We always wondered why in the current culture in Romania, a good artist is not taken into consideration, but when he arrives in another country, he is immediately highlighted and his talent is recognized. We strongly believe that this is a possible answer.

**References:**


