

Art, cultural heritage and parent counselling activities, as pioneering practices for kindergarten class management

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Abstract: *The article is a teaching proposal of a great practical use. It discusses kindergarten class management, based on bibliographic review. It presents nine innovative Art activities, in order to manage the behavioral and emotional difficulties of the kids. It is considered whether it has been possible to replace traditional classroom management practices (such as exclusion from a popular activity, punishment, zero tolerance to acts opposing the rules of the class and consequences of bad actions) with the pioneering class management practices through Art activities. Four Art activities are presented on the article, where Art was utilized as a means of expression, communication and improvement of the behavior of children. Moreover, five Art activities with Parent Counseling are presented. Two of these Art activities with Parent Counseling (in the prehistoric hall of the Museum of Drama and in the ancient Agora of Philippi) engaged children in their Cultural Heritage, having parents as models of respect for the ancient monuments. In conclusion, the nine innovative Art activities developed the subjects of Kindergarten, kept the interest of the children undiminished and contributed to the progressive management of the classroom.*

Keywords: Art, Cultural Heritage, Class Management, Kindergarten, Parent Counseling

JEL Classification: I20, I29

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1 INTRODUCTION

Early childhood determines, to a large extent, the future level of mental and emotional wellbeing (Kourmoussi, N., 2012). The basic attitudes and behaviors consolidate in early childhood. Many children display behavioral difficulties such as aggression, intense anger and outbursts, provocative opposition, intense impulsiveness and lack of inhibitions. Other children face intense emotional difficulties such as excessive shyness or inhibition that burdens their image, intense frustration that they cannot manage the feeling unsatisfied or the feeling of hopeless, sadness, disappointment, difficulty in social interaction, difficulty in exposure to environments and the conclusion of relationships. These are behaviors that affect child's life at school and hinder the management of the Kindergarten class.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Kindergarten Class Management.

Various schools of psychology, who have been involved in the school reality, propose programs to address the problematic behavior of pupils and support the desired behavior to help teachers in the management of their class, such as:

- The by-seat teaching/passive teaching, the rigid program and the traditional approach to discipline as the most effective way of managing a class of children.
- The modification of the behavior by granting praise and remuneration, sentences, deprivation of privileges (approach of the Behaviorism)
- The self-guidance and control procedures of the child (New- Behaviorism)
- The search for social approval (Social Learning)
- The love and confidence in teacher-pupil relationships and the absence of sentences and prohibitions (Psychodynamic Theory)



- Self-actualization as the highest aspiration of the individual, which the school must contribute towards this direction (humanistic school-model of the undirected counseling of Carl Rogers)
- The teaching of good behavior, stable recognition strategies to enhance appropriate behavior, improve student self-control and prevent bad behavior instead of punishment (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support-PBIs) (Reinke et al, 2013, Simonsen et al, 2008, Netzel et al, 2003)

Art and kindergarten Class Management.

The artistic activities of creation and expression (theatre, painting, collage, construction) can contribute to class management, because "art is an almighty tool, a means of expression, a means of communication, a means of therapeutic assistance" (Iliadis, 2006). Many researchers use Art as a treatment, because it enables specialists to appreciate the feelings and perceptions of children, allows communication between the internal world of children and its environment. It has been particularly useful when it comes to children, who do not have the proper vocabulary to express their feelings, because verbal communication is difficult for many aggressive children. Art is a valuable experience in kindergarten. Contact with Art initiates in the aesthetic experience. It is a declaration of attendance, a record and a celebration of the life of a culture, a means of promoting its development and a final judgment on the quality of culture (Dewey, 2005, pp. 339).

Parent Counseling and kindergarten Class Management.

The progressive approach of Parent Counseling, for parents and kindergarten cooperation, is aimed at strengthening the role of each parent, so that he can help the child to mature emotionally and become independent in order to remove children's behavior problems at school: School adaptation difficulties, learning disabilities and attention deficit, hyperactivity disorder, emotional and organic problems of children (Arvanitis-Papadopoulou, 2005, Laloumi-Vidali, 1997, Bernal et al, 1980). The basic aim of Parent Counseling is the social development of children, self-awareness, recognition, expression and management of their emotions. Parent Counseling helps to transfer socio-emotional learning from kindergarten to home to be connected with other aspects of children's lives. Counseling is placed between the science of Pedagogy and Psychology, since it draws theoretical background and methodological tools from both scientific areas. The teacher must also be a good consultant-animator (Malikiosi-Loizou, 2012). In order to contribute to the smoother psychosocial development of children, the teacher must guide pupils and parents. The counseling procedure is not only practiced by professional psychologists, because the counseling is target to healthy individuals. Those who exercise Counseling may be except the special psychologists and teachers too (Karagiannis, Galani and Georgiou, 2014). Krivas (1995) characterizes the Counseling as "Pedagogical Act" integrated in the whole pedagogical process. Kosmopoulos (1996) stresses that school educational practice shows that the advisory work should be applied not only by the expert advisor but also by the teacher.

Cultural heritage, Museum Education and kindergarten Class Management.

Teachers can creatively use the elements of cultural heritage and achieve the management of preschool children class without using authoritarian methods of discipline. Although many children at the age of 4-6 years have self-centered thinking, distraction, behavioral and emotional difficulties, museum education can be integrated into the educational process. It can be a starting point for artistic creations that reduce provocative opposition and intense impulsiveness, because it provides artistic experience. It can also enhance the mental cultivation of children, because the emotional and social approach of cultural spaces can contribute to their socialization. Museums and archaeological sites have received a social and educational role. There have been places for activities and role playing in the areas of interest to young children, to make them participate (Gardner, 2006:308).

The 9 Art activities presented in the article, apart from the pioneering practices of Art, Parent Counselling and creative contact of children with Cultural Heritage, used principles, methodologies and approaches of early childhood education:

- The theoretical principles of Experiential Learning, where pupils rejoice in what they do, working in a climate of security and mutual trust. Because each student is unique, all learning experiences must be associated with their skills, interests and experiences (Katz & Chard, 1993)
- The methodology of working in groups, which enhances the collaboration and responsibility of pupils. Children, when forming a group with common goals or motivations, communicate with each other and are associated with relationships of emotional interaction and dependence (Kanakis, 2001, Trilianos, 1988, Matsaggoyras, 1987, 2002).

The 9 Art activities that presented in the article used the theoretical principles and trends of preschool education that bring children into contact with nature:

- The principles of Environmental Education, which aims to create individuals and groups with responsible environmental attitudes (UNESCO 1977.Tbilisi Declaration, UNESCO 1977.Greece, Lucas 1980-81, Wilson 1993, Georgopoulos & Tsalikis 2003, Georgopoulos 2005, Avgitidou 2008, Dimitriou 2005)
- The Land Art, which combines creativity and learning, fun and exercise, play and exploration in nature and with nature. Land Art gives children opportunities for expression and aims at their aesthetic cultivation. It utilizes the available natural materials (leaves, petals, fruits, twigs, soil, stones, clay, water) and helps them discover the secrets of nature (Tiberghien, 1993/1995/2012, Beardsley, 1998, Max, 2006, Boettger, 2002, Weilacher, 1999) and
- The findings of scientific research on the modern trend of preschool education, the Forest kindergarten, which follows the forest pedagogy and the principles of outdoor education. The Forest kindergarten is an inspiring process, offering empirical learning in a forest environment (Knight

2009 & 2013, Wells & Evans 2003, Williams-Siegfriedsen 2011, Lerstrup & Refshauge 2016)

3 METHODOLOGY

The research aim and objectives were addressing the behavioral and emotional difficulties of preschool children with pioneering classroom management practices, rather than traditional authoritarian classroom management practices. The research population was about 20 preschool students. The teacher was the writer of the article. The 9 Art activities took place in writer's classroom. The activities took place in Kindergarten's yard, on archaeological sites, on green spaces, with or without parents and in different school years. The motivation for artistic creation was given by fairytale and activities in the classroom.

4 RESULTS - DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

A. Art activities on teams

1. A Painting titled "The Water Lilies of the garden of Claude Monet": The painting was created by all children of the class, as part of the program: "Spring through painting". The children saw a video of the impressionist painter Monet painting in his garden. Then, they used Google Map to see how Monet garden and lake is nowadays in Giverny of France and they created a fairytale for the flowers of Monet garden. Afterwards, the children saw a painting of Monet with beautiful pink water lilies in his garden pond, one of the 250 paintings on the same subject, and were charmed. They painted using tempera and painting techniques with prints of sponge and thread, working in groups. They depicted the water, the branches of the willow tree, the reflection of the clouds on the surface of the lake and the lilies with their wide leaves floating on the lake. The painting had a frame and a caption with information.

During the activity, there was no need to use traditional "pedagogical" classroom management practices e.g. punishment, because the children were emotionally involved with the program and demonstrated appropriate behavior. They expressed themselves through a pleasant experiential activity, associated with their interests and abilities, according to the theoretical principles of experiential learning.

2. A Board Game painted by the whole class, on the sustainable management of water resources, entitled: «The Journey of the Little Drop». The children created the board game, based on four fairytales on environmental awareness. The fairytales "The Snowman who did not want to melt" (M. Kontoleon, Patakis Publishers) and "The Cloud that Cried" (Sophia Mantouvalou, Kastaniotis Publishers) gave them the knowledge about the Cycle of Water. The fairytales "Drakopotamos" (Vaso Michailaki-Arfara, Diaplasia Publishers) and "The Burnt Forest" (Stella Vlachopoulou, Kedros Publishers) informed them for the pollution and contamination of water. Then, with the help of kindergarten teacher, the children composed these fairytales and created a fairytale of their own, entitled: "The Journey of the Little

Drop". The children dramatized their fairytale and teacher used the theatrical techniques: problem solving, theatrical play, hypothetical scenarios, role playing and "teacher in role" to deepen the concept of "water" by the view of Sciences and Environmental education. They also saw the video «The Journey of the Little Drop» on the web. In the end, they depicted their fairy tale into their board game.

The methodology used in the painting of the board game was "working in groups". All the children of the class collaborated harmoniously and improved their communication. When the children were playing the board game, it emerged the need to manage behavioral and emotional difficulties, such as the difficult feeling of failure, because some children lost in the game and reacted badly. The practices of exclusion from a popular activity, punishment, zero tolerance to acts contrary to the rules of the class and "consequences of bad actions" were not used by the teacher, but the teaching of good behavior and prevention of bad behavior was used (techniques of Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support-PBIS). Also, during the creation of the table game was given the opportunity for children to learn to interact and share, to tolerate the difference, to realize their similarities with others and to broaden their strategies to solve problems. The art activity helped the children of the class to understand and express their feelings in safe and appropriate ways. As Rubin argues (1978) "The team offers a safer, more reliable and less threatening environment in which they can explore themselves."

3. A Book made by children entitled: "The Tree that was happy, because it gave and took love". This "Green Book", co-created by all children of the class, during the project "I walk in the forest..." It was an adaptation of the famous fairytale "The Giving Tree" (Sel Silverstein, Editions: Doricos). The class was divided into two groups according their age, 4 to 5 and 5 to 6 years old. The text was prepared by 5 to 6 years old group, while the images of the book were collages composed by 4 to 5 years old group preschool by cardboard, embossed paper, cord, leather, beads and natural materials of the forest (pine bark, chopsticks, pieces of pine cones and of the fruit of Plane tree).

During the creation of the book the preschoolers, who had behavioral difficulties, such as frequent aggressive behavior and difficulty in concentration, were touched by fairytale and worked creatively for the construction of the book. Teacher did not have to use traditional class management practices, such as zero tolerance to acts contrary to the rules of the class. The preschoolers were expressed in the composition of individual collages and the anger of aggressive children was decreased. Through art their behavior had been improved, as expression and creation give satisfaction to children, increase their self-esteem, facilitate social interaction and the conclusion of relationships. As mentioned by the psychologist and therapist C. Malchiod (2009:22) "The artistic way of expression leads the individual to personal satisfaction and generally to change".

4. A Poster titled "We Are different and unique" aiming at enhancing children's self-esteem. This art activity on teams was chosen because, as Kramer (2000) claims, artistic creation and expression of emotion through art can increase

children's self-esteem. It was used the program "Steps for Life" (Kourmoussi & Koutras, 2011) that promotes mental health and social-emotional development. Three fairytales were read "Friends Forever" (Sally Grindley, Publisher: Kingfisher), "Give Love" (Angeliki Varela Editions Patakis,) and "Flop Ear" (Guido van Gkenecthen, Publisher: Barrons Juveniles) and children practiced in compliments. The children played puppetry, role playing and the game of different optics analyzing the meanings "different" and "unique". Then, the children created the Poster on teams, forming a tree with the prints of their palm (with finger paint and gold dust) and wrote around the tree the logo "We are different and unique". Inside each palm print were written the compliments given by their friends that stressed: the skills, the good elements or the good behaviors of each child.

This activity for self-esteem reinforcement, led to a more responsible behavior and respect of the rules of the class without traditional practices of class management. For that, teacher coped with the emotional difficulties of infants such as the difficulty in social interaction and the conclusion of harmonious relationships, without using traditional "pedagogical" classroom management practices e.g. exclusion from a popular activity. According to S. Landy (2009), the level of self-esteem affects many areas of the personality of children with the most important cognition, social competence and emotional development. Self-esteem is perhaps the most basic social skill and building block for other social skills that promote mental health (avoiding conflict, problem solving, emotion management, friendship skills, empathy, taking Decisions).

B. The activities of art and cultural heritage awareness with Parental Counseling:

5. Theatrical play with parents and children in kindergarten's courtyard on emotions recognition and management in socially acceptable ways. In the classroom, infants were trained in an Emotional Health Education program. At the end of this program, the following activity took place: parents and children in the kindergarten yard, under teacher's instruction, were divided into 4 groups. They created four stories, based on four words given them by the teacher (fearful – sad – happy – angry). Groups dramatized their story with pantomime while the other groups should guess the emotion expressed by children and parents.

During the activity, children developed their social skills and recognized their feelings and feelings of others (empathy). As parents became animators under the guidance of teacher (Parent Counseling), children understood the way emotions affect behavior. Afterwards in the classroom, children's aggression was reduced without using traditional management practices e.g. "consequences of bad actions". Research has shown that children who are capable of recognizing feelings accurately tend to have more developed social skills, are more acceptable from their peers but also less aggressive. Through art, the child learns to manage emotions, develops the concept of self and learns socially acceptable ways of expressing emotion (Volgi-Phelps, 1985). Art is an almighty tool, a means of expression, a means of communication, a means of healing aid.

6. A Theatrical play in the ancient Agora of Philippi with parents and children, aiming the contact with their cultural heritage. Initially in the classroom, the children were familiar with the everyday way of life in the ancient city of Philippi. At the end of the program, parents and children visited Philippi. While teacher guided them in the exhibits of the Archaeological Museum of Philippi, they should collect information about the way of life in the city of Philippi in the Ancient, Roman and Byzantine years, to compare with the current way of life. Then, parents and children painted ancient garments, jewelry, coins, utensils, food and tools. Afterwards, they played a theatrical game in the shops of the ancient Agora of Philippi, wearing white tunics. They sold and bought the goods, which captured painting.

In this art activity, parents acted as models of correct behavior with the instructions of the teacher (Parent Counseling). The children learned the expected behavior in the archaeological sites and they adopted an attitude of respect to their cultural heritage. At the time of the theatrical play, the children showed self-control and good behavior without outbursts and provocative opposition. So teacher didn't use traditional "pedagogical" class management practices e.g. punishment.

7. Dramatization with parents and children in the Hall of Prehistoric Antiquities of the Archaeological Museum of Drama, entitled: "How they lived and how painted the prehistoric people of our region". Initially, in the classroom the children got information from the second episode of the television series "Once was the man" from the Internet, to out, divided into 4 groups: The mammoths, prehistoric deer, hunters and those who were working on the skins of animals with their stone tools. After a few days, in kindergarten visit in the museum, children lived like Cave people next to the original objects of the Stone Age (mammoth tusk, bones of prehistoric deer and stones as tools for animal skin treatment). However, issues of contraction of children were presented in their exhibition in the new museum environment and problems with the rules of behavior in the area.

To cope with the difficulties, dramatization was repeated at the museum, but with parents and children this time. Using parents as patterns of behavior under the guidance of teacher (Parent Counseling), children were facilitated in exposing them to new environments and managing their contraction. Also, through the parent model, children showed respect for the cultural heritage and I internalized the rules of anticipated behavior in the museum area by controlling their aggression. Thus, teacher replaced traditional "pedagogical" classroom management practices e.g. "consequences of bad actions".

8. Land art (art in landscape) in the garden of kindergarten, entitled: "I Love nature", with parents and children. In the context of Environment's day (5th of June), children saw on the Internet the outdoor creations of Barbara Papadopoulou. Barbara Papadopoulou is an artist of Land Art and "plants" words of grass (miracle, I can, fearless, impetus) in outdoor spaces. The children liked the idea and wanted to carry out its idea in the garden of kindergarten with the help of their parents. They chose the phrase "I love nature" and played language games with the letters of the phrase and assigned them with the original letter of their name. When their parents came, the children planted the words "I love nature" with

grass seeds, with the guidance of the teacher. The letters-molds, which the seeds were planted in, were of foam plastic. With the help of their parents, children formed a letter of the phrase "I love nature" according to the first letter of their name (e.g. Anastasia the A, the Pashalina the P...). Then, they watered the seeds with their glass.

The children benefited not only from the construction of Land Art, but also from the process. As Psaltopoulou (2005:72) supports, it has no value but the final art product, but the process of its creation is the one that transforms the people in depth. During the construction of Land Art, children expressed their opinions, ideas and feelings verbally or not verbally, even children who had difficulty in social interaction. Teacher helped parents (Parents Counseling), to create an appropriate communication climate between their children and cultivate their ability to form collaborative relationships in order to achieve the goal. Therefore, teacher was not forced to use traditional "pedagogical" management practices of class, e.g. zero tolerance in acts contrary to the rules of the class.

9. Creation of individual construction of Land art with parents and children, aiming at the familiarization of children with nature. The actions took place within the framework of an environmental program, which included games with their parents in a green space and in woods, in the spring and autumn. Initially in the classroom they saw many Land Art creations on the Net. They became familiar with the technique and decided to create a Land Art construction.

A. In a green space. Children and their parents created constructions with natural materials (persons, people, Circle, original letter of name) using the materials found in the space (grass, leaves, petals, cherries, chopsticks, pebbles, pine, pine cones).

B. In woods. Children together with their parents formed the first letter of their name with pine heads, a large heart of pine heads, a ship with a mast of pine heads and wood. The activity took place on kindergarten's excursion.

During the creation of individual construction of Land Art in green space and in woods, under the guidance of teacher (parents counseling), the parents took the role of animator. They saw their child's behavior in the group (aggression, intense impulsiveness, lack of inhibitions). Parents helped children manage their negative emotions, so the teacher didn't interfere with traditional class management practices. As Tsounta (2015) argues, Parent Counseling helps to inspire parents to a new way of thinking, which will help them to learn and interpret their child more deeply.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This teaching proposal is of great practical use, due to the originality of the activities and the positive impact on child behavior. During the Art activities in groups, the children expressed themselves, created, joined the group and cooperated. The children who had had communication problems were happy and satisfied. Children who had had behavioral and emotional difficulties concentrated on, as the Art activities were attractive and experiential. During the Art activities with Parent Counseling, the children worked

harmoniously and did not need to use authoritarian methods of discipline. The children preparing with joy to show their parents what they learned. They showed responsible behavior and confidence when preparing the event. The reflection of the activities on the parents was very positive, as shown in the discussion at the end of each meeting and in the written evaluation. All parents, who got the role of their child's teacher under the guidance of the teacher, expressed their satisfaction. During the activities with Art, Parent Counseling and contact with Cultural Heritage, parents became appreciation models of ancient monuments value. The two Cultural Heritage activities were the starting point for artistic creations, which reduced the provocative opposition of aggressive children, because they provided artistic experience. The emotional and social approach of ancient sites contributed to the mental cultivation of children and their socialization.

The Art activities enhanced the subjects of kindergarten and kept the interest of children undiminished. The children didn't show signs of fatigue, pressure, boredom, anxiety or frustration. Activities contributed to the progressive management of the class with pioneering practices and not with traditional techniques of exclusion from a popular activity, punishment, zero tolerance to acts opposing the rules of the class and "consequences of bad actions".

IMPLICATIONS: Despite the positive conclusions of this teaching proposal, the findings cannot be generalized, since the organization of similar activities in many different kindergartens is needed. Further empirical research is necessary to capture the impact of activities on a larger sample of children. It would also be useful to conduct research that would quantify the conclusions of the observation and evaluate the results. A sampling method, such as the qualitative method of participatory observation, is also required. Participatory observation can be used, because the purposes of research concern what people do. A researcher will be required to carry out the observation of 9 activities and then to record, analyze the data and finally interpret the behavior of the children. During participatory observation, the researcher should participate fully in the life and action of children and kindergarten, becoming a member of their team. This will allow the researcher to share the experience and sense of the group simply by observing them (Gill and Johnson, 1997).

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