



VOICE

Voicing children Opportunities
Interaction Collective decision
making Education

Free play scenario:
«The restaurant»
An example of play pedagogy



H.F.R.I.
Hellenic Foundation for
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From teacher participation during free play to extending children's play through play pedagogy

- ▶ Two boys play in the shop play area. One pretends to cook (boy A) using the vegetables he has, while the other (boy P) carries items from the dollhouse (plates, glasses, spoons) following the first boy's suggestions. At some point the Kindergarten teacher sits at a table near them. The children observe this and whisper to each other. One boy (P) approaches her holding a plate of food and a fork and tells her:
- ▶ *P: Here Mrs*, I brought you food to eat.*
- ▶ *Kindergarten teacher: What have you made?*
- ▶ *P: Spaghetti with minced meat.*
- ▶ *Kindergarten teacher: It looks delicious, how did you make it?*
- ▶ *P: I don't know. I made it.*
- ▶ *Kindergarten teacher: So you're telling me that A is the cook.*
- ▶ *P: Yes, I only give the food.*
- ▶ *Kindergarten teacher: You're probably the waiter. That's what you're telling me.*
- ▶ *P: Yes, this is our restaurant.*
- ▶ *(*Mrs: children call their teachers like that most usually in the Greek context)*

What do I understand / what do I think as a teacher participating in this game?

What children do

- ▶ Children build a scenario during free play time: they create an imaginary reality.
- ▶ They handle objects with meaning in the context of the game.
- ▶ They communicate and find a way to play.
- ▶ Their scenario is rather poor (simple imitation).

Teacher's thoughts

- ▶ How can I utilize children's interest?
- ▶ What are the learning opportunities I could utilize to enrich their experiences around the specific scenario?
- ▶ What will be my actions to enhance children's reflections on their play and participation in decision-making?
- ▶ What actions can I take to expand further the scenario of the game?

Starting point

► **Teacher poses questions during her participation in play**

- **Kindergarten teacher:** Okay, so I'm in a restaurant like you told me. But I didn't know that until you told me. What do you think someone needs to know when they are in a restaurant? Is it enough that someone brings them something to eat that they didn't order? Is this what happens when you go to a restaurant with mom and dad?
- **P:**No!
- **A:** Sit down Mrs, I'll write on a piece of paper "restaurant" and we'll stick it outside the shop (runs and takes a piece of paper and tries to write, thinking which letters are suitable).
- **Kindergarten teacher:** I would also like to ask, how can I order something after I come to your restaurant. Is there a way for me to know what foods you have prepared?
- **P:** He looks at the kindergarten teacher and thinks (at that moment another child joins them, called M).
- **M:** Mrs needs a paper to write the foods. I know how to do it. He runs and brings an empty piece of paper and says to P. Yes, here we will write the food.
- The two children are sitting at a table and try to make the list of food. Finally, they make a list with the help of the kindergarten teacher.

► **Teacher proposes an extension of play by involving the rest of the class during plenary**

- **Kindergarten teacher:** Today I noticed that P and A had a great idea to make a restaurant in our class and they need our help. I suggest we help them. What do you say?

Teacher supports children's decisions based on questions that explore their prior knowledge and design /planning of their actions

► Questions to explore prior knowledge

- *Have you been to a restaurant?*
- *Can someone describe to me what it's like? What is happening there?*
- *Which people work there? What does everyone do?*
- *Why do people go to restaurants?*

► Questions that encourage decision making by children

- *How do you imagine we could turn our little shop in the classroom into a restaurant? (common goal)*
- *What do you suggest we do? (recording ideas)*
- *We need to decide who will do what. How do you think we can work better? (split into groups, division of responsibilities).*

Children make decisions and propose actions – teacher strengthens decision making and cooperation among children in group-work

► Children propose and decide on...

- The name of the restaurant (label).
- The construction of the advertising menu: list of foods.
- The preparation of the money to be used in their transactions.
- The layout of the space (they draw their ideas)
- Construction of a no smoking sign.
- They decide to work in groups.

► Teacher supports decisions in group work

- *But before we start working, we need to make decisions about how we will work together without difficulty. What rules do you think would be useful for us to work on the teams from now on?*
- *Is there something that is difficult for you at the moment as a working group? What is this and why?*
- *Here I notice that there is a disagreement between you. Can one of you explain it to me? Well, in that case what else could you do to find a solution that satisfies both of you? Should we ask other children of your group too? What do others on your team have to suggest to help you find a solution?*

I support the dialogue after children finish their group work to enhance their participation in decision making and evaluation of their actions (plenary)

► Indicative questions...

- Which team wants to show us their idea of what they worked on and describe how they all worked together?
- Where would you like to place the sign you made for your restaurant and why?
- What do you think the promotional menu of the food you made will serve? Is there any chance it will change? When and why?
- If someone asked you for information about your restaurant, what would you tell them?
- How did you spend your time working on the team? What did you like or find difficult about working in a group and why?

Teacher's reflection

► What did I do?

- Give opportunities to children to express their thoughts and explain their actions
- Provide information through questions about what a restaurant entails
- Support children in making decisions
- Present two children's idea of free play in the whole class and introduce a proposal for joint action.
- Encourage children's initiatives and ideas.
- Support children in putting their ideas in action
- Support group-work.

► What else could I do?

- To connect their knowledge with a real situation: visit to a restaurant (i.e. children could prepare questions for an interview with the owner, children could create a list of good guest behavior tips).
- To create opportunities for new starting points, i.e. How do you imagine it could have been a vegetarian only restaurant?
- To create new problems. E.g. how could we announce the operation of our restaurant and recommend to children of the other class to visit it?



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