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Stimulation of Play by Means of a Toy

The most important condition for increasing of relations' intensity and for game creation is pedagogical guidance. It presupposes an active position of a teacher in extending of childrens' social interests in combination with creative work, initiative and independence of a child in the game progress. In the process of the game guidance the most results bring methods which activate moral actions of children in accordance with ideas about socially directed relations of people that are developed in child's consciousness. As an effective pedagogical method inducing children to reflect in their games familiar activities and relations of adults we used toys selected basing on connection of images reflected by the toys with the educational content about activities of adults.

In order to ground this principle we will consider how the issue concerning content and assortment of toys is connected with theory and practice of the game. During selection of toys for role games we proceeded from the thesis of the Soviet pedagogy and psychology about the game as activity in which children reproduce their ideas about the environment. The main place in a game occupies reflection of human activity (D.B. Elkonin) and, in particular, people's work. Hence it is necessary to choose such toys which can remind to children about actions and relations of people and help them to reproduce the corresponding images in a game.

A toy helps to develop children's knowledge about surroundings more actively and induces them to reflect it creatively in their play. Studies of these characteristics of a toy allow to use it in order to guide the play in a natural and indirect way. To our opinion by offering toys to children in accordance with the knowledge about social phenomena and human activity to be developed tutors will induce them to invent the play, will help to develop a play plot and to reproduce playing actions, relations and behaviour. Toys as generalized and conventional images of real objects – tools and labour results – remind children about the facts that they know about labour activity and describe corresponding playing images and events. The more activities can be reflected with the help of a toy the stronger children's interest to it and their striving for using it in the play, the better is performance of playing parts. A toy arouses children's joy, sympathy, compassion, concern for other people, desire and ability to share something with other children, teaches them to use things carefully. Therefore simultaneously with development of children's cognitive and moral experience it is necessary to select for them toys and playing surroundings that have wide possibilities to be used in the play. The above-stated pedagogical principle of dynamic toy selection could be realised as follows. Toys for each age group of children should correspond with their understanding of surroundings. With its development and enrichment the toys at children's disposal should be changed and varied. These statements are true either for ready-made toys and for the toys that are created by children and a tutor accordingly to their needs during development of a play plot. Teachers of preschool institutions use this principle. But they cannot provide children with all necessary toys as the modern production does not meet the requirements.

The above stated principle of toy choice is grounded by the historical review of a toy topic on the different stages of development of human society (V.P.Plekhanow, V.P. Pryakhin, D.B. Elkonin). The study of this problem showed that during the different social epoches content, design, material and technology of toys' manufacturing changed according

to spiritual and material values of the society. The general tendency of toys' manufacturing was characterized by tight connection with the life style of people and peculiarities of their work in the different historical epoches. This tendency has been retained also nowadays, but it was not implemented in pedagogical requirements to toys, in recommendations for preschool institutions, in advice to parents, in plans for toys manufacturing industry. Meeting the main requirements of the society to toys which correspond to modern ideas of children about surroundings the toys' manufacturing industry does not satisfy the requirements to a toy as to a pedagogical manual yet. A lot of toys necessary for childrens' education and reflection of their ideas and skills in the play which are developed according to the curriculum in preschool establishments are not created yet though there is an acute necessity for such toys. In all fairness we should mention that such demands have not been made by pre-school pedagogy on the toy manufacturing industry yet, because there was no theoretical basis and methodical elaboration. But some observations and facts confirm that the grounded by us principle of toys' selection is correct.

T. Flerina recommended some playing-sets for definite play subjects reflecting the modern life with its live style, construction and technics. Such toys extend child's experience, develop its creative imagination, consolidate children and bring joy in their live. D. Mendzheritska trying to enrich content of plays used toys reminding about the subjects a child have seen or read.

A.Grey elaborating equipment for playing-grounds regarded it as means stimulating child's playing activities.

In many investigations of childrens' play there is a general tendency to use the toys which correspond to the subject of a play being developed. Though the connection between toys and the subject of the play is evident only E.A.Flerina and D.V. Mendzheritska closely approached to this extremely important issue. Till now the relations between content of knowledge and image of toys were not discovered, their significance for activization of ideas about surroundings was not grounded, the role of toys selection for realization of curriculum requirements and in particular for developing of play and moral aspects of childrens' relations was not showed.

When and under what conditions will a toy induce children to play? Answers to these questions are important when determining possibilities of using toys as pedagogical means for activation of childrens' ideas during the play.

In our experimental work the approbation of efficiency of the above-stated principle was carried out. The toys used in the game represented the most typical things, objects, tools and products of human labour. They were at childrens' disposal (or partly made by them) in accordance and while learning some labour actions and processes. In such combination a toy reminding to children about already known content rouses their interest to reproduce it in the game. In the other case a toy provokes curiosity of the child, induces it to subjective and sometimes to functional actions. But the child cannot develop a plot-role play as it does not know how similar things are used by the people in their activities.

O.K. Zinchenko considers rightfully that children associate certain ideas with toys in their memory, recollect vivid pictures, thus they have an opportunity to work up the live experience they already have. However it is impossible to agree with her following statement: a girl needs a doll to feel like a mother and a "driver" or a "pilot" need a car or a plane. We suppose that it is vise versa - a child needs a doll as it wants to imitate the dearest person – the mother; an already known image of a driver rouses its interest, so it plays the role of these attractive for him people during the game. Corresponding toys help him to express its feelings. The statement of O.K. Zinchenko that dolls symbolizing images of the people of different professions would help to consolidate the ideas about surroundings is disputable. We think that dolls will help to make the knowledge about appearance, special clothes more precise. For realization of playing parts dolls may be used successfully only in producer's games. A child replaces its absent friends by dolls, it transfers the roles which it cannot fulfil itself simultaneously. In the plot-role collective play such dolls are excessive as children strive themselves to take corresponding roles. The vivid example of this we can find in the

investigations of D.V. Mendzheritska. Children put aside proposed to them dolls representing a tramdriver, a conductor and a passenger, though they began to play a travel. Probably the images of these dolls induced them to play, but the children play themselves the correspondent roles satisfying their interest to them.

In the works of Mendzheritska we can find the following requirement to a toy: it must have such properties that allow to act with it, to play a role. These ideas were proved and confirmed in many of next works. But some specific recommendations how a toy helps children to play their roles more actively and fully were not determined.

Basing on our facts we came to the conclusion that the main pedagogical requirement to a toy is as follows: it must induce a child to reproduce all the actions and relations known by him and which characterize the role being performed. Design and details of toys must correspond to childrens' ideas which are formed while learning surroundings systematically or in a spontaneous way. If a toy has not the properties for implementing of child's ideas it may induce them to improve the toy's design additionally. But normally a child does not implement its ideas with such a toy, because it does not activate them. In other words childrens' ideas are induced to be implemented in the play by means of corresponding toys. In accordance with their ideas children choose toys for a play and sometimes create lacking toys. The possibility to act variously with the help of a toy or a game construction induces children to creative development of a plot of the game on the basis of their knowledge about different actions and moral behavior. For example, if a boat has stairs and cabins, sailors help passengers to go upstairs and place them in the cabins. The captain controls attentively the crew to work well-coordinated, everybody to fulfil his duties and to help the passengers. The image embodied in a toy induces children to recall the specific labour actions of adults and to reflect them in their roles. Using toys children call them and enrich each others knowledge about purpose of different things, labour actions and specify the moral sense of the work..

Without a toy children can forget even the familiar actions and episodes of the plot. For example, while playing the teacher's role they imitated many of her actions using toys remembering them their pre-school institution, but they constantly missed morning exercises though they made them every day. And only when the teacher introduced the morning exercises with flags and small flags were proposed for the play the children began to use them with enthusiasm during gymnastics with dolls.

We determined that activization of childrens' ideas in the play with the help of a toy is a regularity which objectively exists. It doesn't depend on skills of a teacher or methods that he applies. Already the look of a toy corresponding to the childrens' ideas induces them to reproduce them in the game irrespective of the fact if the teacher wants them to do this or not. Therefore before offering a new toy it is necessary to foresee the actions and relations which it may provoke, to assume if the children have such experience already and if it is necessary to activate it. So, after to the playing interior of the room of the middle group a desk was added the children playing the roles of teachers were leaving their dolls-pupils as a rule although they took care of them a lot before. Instead of this they began to "write" something attentively sitting at the desk. It is turned out that they "wrote" plans reflecting their spontaneous impressions. Of course, the teacher should not have encouraged the activation of those imcomprehensible to the children facts in the play. Especially because they took them away from teacher's actions and relations having a moral sense.

The more actions familiar to children can be performed with a toy the stronger interest of the players is and striving to use it in the play. It fulfils their creative ideas and makes role playing more eventful. Therefore while children are developing their cognitive and moral experience it is necessary to select toys and game equipment which have different options for using in the play. For example, a toy motor boat or a hydrofoil craft with their outward appearance reminding of the modern means of water transport enable a child to reproduce general concepts – navigation, stopping and turning of a vessel. Play with such a toy is a rather a reflective process than a role play. Extention of child's knowledge about some duties of the crew – captain, quarter master, sailors and passengers – induces it to express

everything it knows with corresponding actions and relations. It requires actions in the chart house, radio-cabin, rooms, hold and saloon. Therefore a toy which the child can only "float" with does not satisfy its extensive ideas. Such a toy would be more interesting where passengers can be accommodated and serviced, a "steering wheel" - turned, "dashboard" - controlled, messages - "wired" and "received", all what makes the game more interactive. Lack of conventional elements recalling typical features of the real object narrows ability of children to creatively implement their ideas about activities and relations of people, because with the help of such toy children can reflect their knowledge only partially. Hence the figurative features of a toy allow it to develop and even upgrade the game. Obviously toys should be chosen according to the game level to be developed.

Expressiveness of the toy image is connected with formation of the play. The research done by S.L.Novosiolova and E.V. Zvorygina indicates to the importance of toys' selection according to child's knowledge about them. The researchers trace the toys' selection route from general to realistic and further to symbolic images. This allows on the one hand to fill childrens' play with a new content and on the other hand to develop skills to act on the imaginary level. N.N.Pantina and N.Y.Mikhailenko omitting the issue about initial generalization of the image consider that with development of playing skills requirements to a toy change from specific to generalized and then to playing sets. To our opinion even senior preschool children go through the initial stage where toys can be more general than in the further activity.

Childrens' striving to fantasy, to conventional use of things characteristic for the pre-school age and pedantic demand of true reflection are peculiarly connected in the play. Exactly the last component apparently determines striving of pre-school children to use the toys reflecting the real objects. Having watched a bricklayer doing his job children started "building", playing the correspondent role. They did not simply place bricks in the shape of a wall. It turned out that the wall should be built with the help of specific actions typical for a bricklayer. Imaginary mortar perfectly served for this purpose. However, children needed a trowel to put it on the bricks. Children were satisfied only then when the toy resembling a bricklayer's trowel was made.

Figurative toys conventionally reflecting the real objects support the fantasy and playing actions of children. They create many various imaginable situations where they reproduce creatively the moral content to be assimilated. For example, while playing with a gas-stove a child "started the stove" and "set fire"; in the tea-pot "boiled water"; "treated an ill person" and so on. Variety of conventional situations which children may create and play by means of figurative toys, to considerable extent was stipulated by examples of creative use of the toys, naturally presented by the teacher during different games.

The principle of toy selection considered above, requirements to their functional properties stipulating increasing of pedagogical efficiency spread on the toys which may be given to children as ready-made things or made during the play. In the elaborated by us approximate list of toys necessary for realization of the curriculum requirements there are a lot of toys which are not manufactured at present. It is impossible to buy them, but they are necessary for the play. Feeling this necessity children replace them by a similar object or construct something looking like a necessary toy. Such attempts should be encouraged and while making the toys children must receive the necessary support. This way two goals may be achieved. First of all, the object necessary for play performance appears. Besides during the creative work interest of children to the play topic becomes more active and deep; children discuss peculiarities of the play, character of relations between them. Cooperation of children in manufacturing of toys is important for development if their creative imagination both during making of the toys and during development of the play project.

Selected according to our principle a ready-made (or even better created by the children jointly) toy was used immediately in the play. There was no need in additional playing up as some authors propose. Studying of the toy by the children was minimized or did not take place at all. Apparently recognizing in the toy the image of familiar labour tools the children reproduced at once the functional properties of the toy while playing with it. All this

indicated to relativity of K. Hayt's considerations that the play begins after the child had studied the object, and knows what to do with it, thus the research activity forestalls the playing one.

In order to begin and to develop the joint play, thematical toy sets were created that may serve to performers of several playing roles, united by one play topic "Kindergarten", "Transport - water, air, road" etc. In such cases toys induce children not only to play, but also to communicate intensively. For example, if for the play with the topic "Constructing" constructing materials, lorries, crans are at disposal, accordingly children play roles of a fitter, a driver, a crane-driver and begin corresponding labour relations. With a joiner tools set or house-painting equipment conditions are created for performance of the corresponding roles and involving of new participants. Naturally players' relations are extended. If we will add dolls to the play, the builders will begin to regard them as new settlers, will build the house more carefully, will try to finish the building faster. This way responsible attitude arises.

To check the effectiveness of the above-stated approach we offered to the children different thematical sets of toys. Comparing the content of the plays, which were developed by using of one of the sets, revealed a direct connection between roles chosen by children, their expression in the play and relations with the playing material used in each play. So, wenn the children played with a group of dolls in the room or in the bed-room, they played the roles of a teacher or a nurse. When to the play-set was added equipment of a medical consulting room the roles of a physician and a medical nurse appeared. If for the play a kitchen and a kitchen set of plates and dishes was offered, the children expressed a wish to play the role of a cook. Another phenomenon also took place: a child, choosing a role interesting for it, selected toys, necessary for performing of corresponding playing actions. And only in that cases when necessary toys were absent the children began to use objects alike those necessary for chosen role. For example, brick-layer was supplied with a spade or a shover, if a trowel was absent. When a small trowel was made all children played a brick-layer using only that tool.

Guided by the reviewed approach we made dynamic combinations of toys on the different stages of our experimental work which induced children to reproduce actions and relations, that were typical for the images that children were learning with the help of the teacher at that moment. So we succeeded to direct children to reflecting of that activities and relations of adults, which they were learning and which were not represented in the play relations fully enough. For example, when we combined an interior of a medical room and a bedroom in the game, it induced children to reproduce relations between a doctor, a pre-school teacher and a nurse, who took care of the children. The combination of kitchen tools, a dining room and a bathroom helped children to reflect relations between a cook, a pre-school teacher and a nurse. Also having tools for a playing-room and a dressing-room they reproduced relations between a pre-school teacher and a nurse. Combining different interiors we tried to induce children to different actions, relations and to creative thinking while developing of a plot. For example, in the combination of a medical room and a bedroom, doctor's prescriptions were different from those when a medical room was combined with a play-ground. In the first case, "patients" were put in bed, but in another case a doctor rendered some medical aid to those who had got a slight trauma or caught a cold. Under different conditions relations between the performers change. In the dressing-room relations between a pre-school teacher and a nurse were based on the same actions – dressing of the dolls. In the dining-room and the play-room connections of dependence arise between these actions: a nurse is laying a table for a breakfast, a pre-school teacher is carrying out the morning exercises. However, all these actions are heterogeneous, they fulfil only one purpose – they express concern for a child.

The data of such comparison quantitative analysis as well as a lot of examples, available in every play report, show the tight dynamic connection between the knowledge content, toys' images and direction of the play. It is maintenance of this objectively existing connection that stipulates high educational results of the approach to toys selection that we have investigated.

Thus toys' selection and placing them to childrens' disposal according to their knowledge about reality, allows to use such toys as an effective pedagogical instrument for indirect activation of childrens' ideas about activities and relations of people as well for development of play.