

# DRAWING AS A FORM OF COMMUNICATION AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION OF A PRESCHOOL CHILD

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**Abstract** – This paper analyzes and theoretically elaborates concepts of children's drawings, communication, creativity and their role in the upbringing and development of a preschool child. Detailed explanation of the characteristics of the child's pre-school age, and modes of creative expression of preschool children with an emphasis on artistic creativity are worked out. In this work, we used the method of theoretical analysis and case study method. We presented a case study of preschool children (BT) where we emphasized the importance of artistic creativity of the child to communicate with the environment, but also as an important aspect of children's creative expression.

**Index Terms** — Drawing, communication, creativity, preschooler

## I. INTRODUCTION

„A child's drawing (child drawing, dessin d'enfant, Kinderzeichnung, risunok detski) expresses a spiritual development of a child, general intellectual development, development of fine mobility, ability to observe, and, finally, a child's temperament, feeling and experiencing the environment.“[9].

These are the reasons to use a drawing as a diagnostic mean, e.g. intelligence test „Drawing of a man“ F. Gudinaf (Goodenough), test Minkovske „My family“etc.

Drawings were found on the cave walls, rocks, terracotta tiles, dust, paper, etc.

The child's drawing on a tile was found in the early Bronze Age and it is around 3000 years old [6]. Interest to study the child's drawing started at the end of the 19th century. Therefore, Corrado Ricci collected and analyzed a huge number of children's drawings and published a book „Children artists on a child's drawing“ in 1887 [1]. The accent was put on a subject matter and a difference in comparison to conventional art of adults.

One should approach from different aspects in order to analyze a child's drawing, and these aspects are: content,

shape, color, movement, proportions, space, as diagnostic, therapeutic and communication means.

„Firstly, turned to a process, not to a product of his creative activity, with an effort to form and express his relationship towards the world which surrounds him, other people and himself, doing it in a very unconventional, to some extent egocentric way, in that sense a child is different from the grown up artist, who consciously longs to a product through which he transforms his feelings and ideas onto others, communicate with them [5].

While the process of creation of an adult undergoes very specific stages, from an idea, searching the way how to accomplish it, choices among them, to the final realization and evaluation of what has been done, a child, especially if it is younger, at first is occupied by the process of handling some material itself, while the idea, as well as the decision of what the work represents, can be made at the end, or not at all. When we ask a child who has been scribbling on a piece of paper, what he draw, it can happen that in two days he gives two completely different answers which means that the thing he had scribbled has a function of „Rorschach test“. At the same time, a child, in most cases, does not have a critical view towards the thing he had done, which can be explained with a lack of criteria, as well as the lack of intention to get to some result. He was more interested in the process of dancing, singing, painting with fingers, drama presentation, etc. and all of it, having no goal besides the process itself, qualifies these activities as a game. And that is the most important difference between the grown up artist or a scientist- finder, who, even if they enjoyed the process of creation, still thought more about its results, which will be very carefully evaluated.“ [5].

A child's artistic drawing neither copies natural look, nor scenery, things, figures and some other motives from the child's environment, onto the paper, earth, wall, furniture, etc. using colors, pen, chalk, fingers, clay and some other materials.

„Having in mind various aspects and theories (art – expressive, psychological, social, aesthetic, pedagogical – didactical– methodical etc.) a child's drawing should be seen as a artistic language and an universal way of communication

with the environment, on their own way and psychologically and physically way adapted to their age using artistic elements as the words of an artistic language "[8].

A child's drawing is an expression of a child's honesty based on inner needs of a child. Children do not have a goal outside the process itself, in comparison to adults, who create for others, expecting it to be liked, adjusting the motives and qualities, in order for a product to have a specific meaning to them.

A child's drawing tells us the best about the child's psychological and physical development, as well as about the state and ways of his perception, communication and reaction to the environment where he lives.

In preschool institutions a child's drawing is a way of organized educational work used to develop children's ability to observe, see, shape, color, proportions, spatial, graphical, coloristic and plastic expression, sense to combine, create and to experience beauty, develop creative abilities, etc.

A child's drawing is a projection of his conscious and subconscious dynamisms, states, visions of environment being percept, experienced by the child and it presents an artistic product as a new visual reality, ways of communication, interaction and relations made with his environment.

„A child's drawing as a product of his artistic expression, as well as a game, is not an anarchic activity deprived of any kind of rules. On the contrary, according to the effort they put in it, significance they give to what they do, attitudes they express, it is obvious that they are being commanded by some inner laws which are as strict as much as they are arbitrary. However, their characteristic is that they originate from the activity itself, a person doing and managing it, a person whose inner motives are leading it, and they resist any external intervention, other tastes, stereotypes, which are violating them. On the other side, technical perfection, on its own, is not a standard of a quality of someone's creative expression, especially if it is deprived of honesty and authenticity, if it is not started from within, but it is made by imitating or conforming to someone else's taste and demands.“ [5].

Using drawings, as well as some other ways of creativity, children get to know themselves, get a positive image of themselves, and they free themselves of an inferior role that they have in relation to adults, because they have neither experience nor power to participate in production and the world of adults.

„However, development of a positive image about themselves cannot be imagined without the freedom in expression and creation; a child is giving statements, getting to know himself, proving his abilities, confirming as a personality, firstly through these processes. Various forms of expression are in most cases the only space where everything is allowed to them, where they can be equals with the adults and where they can confirm their unique abilities. The more important and the more crucial it is the children are younger.

Encouraging creative expression has, besides some other things, a task to prepare children for changes which are being expected in the future society and to prepare them for taking

over active roles in these changes. Starting with what kind of an attitude a child will build according to his participation in creating materialistic and spiritual goods, in finding their own ways to express and putting in some innovations in the reality that surrounds him, it depends what kind of an attitude towards life and the world in general he will have, whether he will accept the role of an executive and a consumer who is perfectly ok with the present situation and submit to the authorities, or he will have an active relationship towards shaping his own existence, important for taking part in the social streams of life, and long for the changes which will make it better, more humane and directed to higher goals. A human life may be fulfilled with sense only as long as it is fulfilled with creative efforts.” [5].

A child's artistic expression through a drawing will help him in development, “to nourish his own aesthetic sensibility, gain rich and various senses, to refine his emotions and build a constant need for creative and constructive work in his own social and natural environment. This function should not be only about preparing children for later engagement in art, it is more important to be used to improve a general child's development in a way which cannot be accomplished by some other types of activities. By developing creativity we contribute a child's development as an individual in the whole, who will, throughout the life, be guided by humane values and aspirations, an individual with balanced intellectual, emotional and social characteristics and nourished authentic needs.”[5].

An experienced teacher, through a product of a child's creative expression, can find out such information about children that they are not able to tell, to reveal their inner conflicts and problems, which they are not even aware, themselves. Psychologists for example, can find out an index of a child's intelligence through the drawing, people working in a clinic can see the relationship with the family members by examining colors and dimensions of the drawn characters.

One of the most important indexes of the authenticity of the process of expression is enjoying in the act of creation itself, because its basic characteristic is it is self rewording. A child should be observed from the very moment he takes a pen, or a piece of a colored chalk, and uses it to leave marks everywhere around him. The most important is the process itself, and in the case it is not distracted, self-confidence that a child gains in himself and the environment, as well as the relationship towards the research as the act which is accepted, appreciated and encouraged. Creative activity is also the best practice of independence, which should be developed so that a child is able to lean on his own strengths, to express his own ideas in a way that best suits him.

Real child creativity can be seen in spontaneity, freedom of expression and constant improvisations. Liberation from the stereotyped behavior and imitation of the others is important not only for the development of such a creative expression, but for the general, especially emotional, development of a preschool child.

## II. DEVELOPMENT PHASES OF A CHILD'S DRAWING

Phases of development of a child's drawing go in accordance with the whole psychic development of a child.

A child's drawing appears from the age of two and three, in the period of intensive speech development, because speech and drawing are related expression means.

According to Krstić [7], a child's drawing is consisted of subjects from the environment where the child lives, (a man, a ball, a doll, a teddy bear, a pot, a spoon...). The subjects from his environment the child presents in a dynamic relation, the child draws the man with his legs and arms spread, a house has a chimney with the smoke coming out, a car is in the move, he actually presents them the way he sees them. By the drawing a child presents some things he knows, and cannot see, such as the inside of a ship, bus, room, house (X ray drawing).

In case of a form and the contents of a child's drawing, the development goes parallel with the development of the mobility, perception, creating concepts, emotional and some other functions of a child's development.

Development phases of a child's drawing are:

- Scribbling (18 months to 2 years), refer to Fig.1
- A symbolic drawing (3 – 6 years), refer to Fig.2 and Fig. 3
- A transition to a realistic drawing (from 6 – 10 years),
- Realistic expression (after the age of 10) [9].

In the phase of scribbling a child draws some lines, irregular circles, and ellipses. A child is looking forward to the simple movements of a pen or a crayon, because they leave some marks. Drawing is an expression of mobility, without any meaning, or contents. In the beginning he does not even stay inside the framework of a paper, the only thing we have is a randomly made drawing. A child tells us what he draws, naming the contents is sometimes random, and so the same drawing can represent various things.



Fig. 1. Example of scribbling

A symbolic drawing appears in the period from 3 to 6 years. Characteristics of the symbolic drawing are:

schematism (intellectual realism), a child draws everything he knows and feels for the subjects, and very rarely what he sees (e.g. X ray drawing),

emotions have a very strong influence (emphasizing and noticing what a child likes and what is significant for him),

simplification (missing out, simplifying difficult, meaningless), the younger the child, the drawing has less details, lines do not touch, and the angles are irregular,

Composition– no order, subjects are just put on the surface, turning over the piece of paper while drawing. Only when they are five or six years old, the proportions of the subject are much more realistic, but still no perspective.

Drawing a man – at first, it is just a cephalopod, with a circle which represents a head and a torso, with two lines for the legs. It appears at the age of three. After that, the eyes come. At five or six, we have a torso, a face, extremities, and after that details such as fingers, clothes, buttons, etc.

Colors– the choice of colors depends on the current mood, emotions and temperament, and not on the real colors of the subjects in the nature.

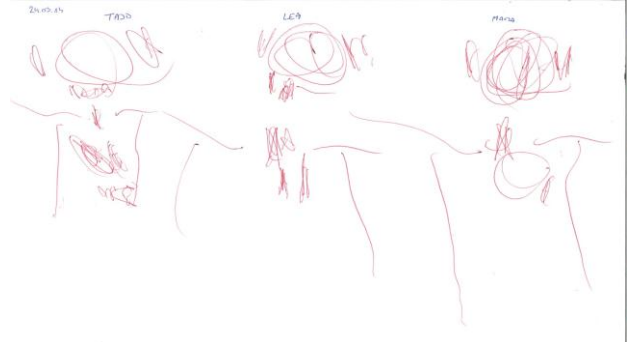


Fig. 2. Example of symbolic drawing



(Signature) ANA

Fig. 3. Example of symbolic drawing

A child, when drawing in a period of the symbolic artistic expression, gives a name to every drawing. For example, "This is aunt Ana". After the age of four, he names the drawing as soon as he starts drawing or soon after he finishes.

In this period he mostly draws people rather than objects. First, he draws people, then animals, then houses, cars, trains and some other objects.

Before starting school, he starts with the schematic drawings; he draws by the memory, without looking at the objects. The schematic period is a stage of a child's artistic creativity. A child, very spontaneously, in accordance with the level of his development, presents by artistic means, his experiences and a specific way of communication with the environment.

In the period of the realistic expression, which starts at the age of nine, or ten, a child's drawing has real characteristics and a child tries to adjust it to the real world.



Fig. 4. Painting phase - drawn story



Fig. 5. Painting phase - drawn story

A research that studied a child's art discovered four stages in development. The first phase is a phase of arrangement. The second phase is a phase of a shape - years 3 and 3,5. At that phase they combine signs to produce crosses, squares and closed lines. The third phase is a phase of designing-recognizable figures and circles connected to each others. The fourth phase is a phase -around 4 and 5 years- a drawing becomes representative. Children start drawing people, houses, animals, and that is a phase of painting (see Fig. 4 and 5). Since that moment, children add details and later they combine symbols in one drawing and in that way they show us a drawn story [4].

### III. SIGNIFICANCE OF ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF A CHILD

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Artistic activities are very useful for work with preschool children. These activities encourage ability to observe, remark, notice and create beauty; they strengthen the aesthetic qualities of a personality, ability to understand art and messages in it, paintings, the graphic art, modeling and other forms of artistic expression. Living in the world rich with artistic messages, a child will develop sensitivity for the importance of art in the life of a human. Working with different artistic materials, a child will develop a mobility of a hand, skill and coordination, visual sensitivity, and some other qualities. They also develop abilities for interior decoration, environment, a sense for aesthetics and beauty in the environment, ability to preserve and create beauty. Drawing and painting belong to basic and significant shapes of expressions of a man's psychic life. Children, with the same joy, reality and objectivity, draw and paint, to express their thoughts, wishes and demands using colors and lines, in order to transmit, in the objective reality, as a message, their inner unrest, state, experiencing the real world which surrounds them. That is also one way, technique, of showing objective, real children's world.

A child's drawing presents an area of his activity, problems and questions which adults, parents, pedagogues, psychologists, painters, sculptors, and all who are into the upbringing and education, need to answer.

A child's artistic-emotional expression through the drawing or in some other way enables teachers, pedagogues and some other competent individuals, to get to his inner life, to discover what makes it different from the inner life of an adult.

The freedom of a child's creativity "must not be restrained by the rules, but it should be done in the framework of pedagogical and didactical principles, rules, scales of norms." [3].

A child should be enabled that with his activity he frees psychic tension, inner unrest, to develop abilities, observation, representation, self-consciousness, persistence, working discipline, participation in a team work, cultural joy, interests for artistic creativity, etc.

In preschool institutions it should be enabled that children creatively solve given tasks expected by the curriculum. In this way a space will be provided for constant development of a child's psychophysical abilities which are necessary in everyday life. Besides that, sensitivity for artistic things, expressive meaning of lines, colors and shapes will be developed.

Communicative and educational functionality of an artistic expression of a child is seen in revealing a child in his complete complexity, his inner world, psychic activities,

experiencing and reacting to influences which come from the environment.

Pedagogues are given the possibility that with some specific tasks in a process of a game and free activities, using appropriate pedagogical measures and actions, by the mean of drawing, influence his psychophysical life and development, liberating him from various psychic burdens, deformations, creating harmony in his actions of observing, noticing, visual understanding, positive emotional experiencing and reacting, will, mobility – actions, discipline, etc.

When drawing a child plays and talks.

„His speech through a game and drawing is more sincere and more spontaneous than when he uses words“[2].

If we want to penetrate into the sphere of a child's experiences and to reveal suppressed emotions and attitudes, we can accomplish that following his nonverbal communication such as drawing.

„A child while drawing liberates his hidden motives, his suppressed fears, with a movement and color expresses his unconscious contents.“ [2]. The bigger and more unconscious a child's problem is, the bigger possibility that he will express it using symbols which, very carefully, with a lot of knowledge and skills we analyze.

To make an interpretation of a child's drawing as trustworthy as possible, it is necessary for a child to explain it, we also need to know his life situation, and some specific symbols which have some general meanings.

A drawing reveals inner problems, emotional conflicts, favors and unrests, fears and it encourages an educator to search for the cause and provide help to a child in order to help him release sufferings which prevent his normal and healthy development. A drawing can also reveal harmony of conscious and unconscious, verbal and non verbal in human behavior and upbringing actions. A child's drawing is very difficult to interpret if a child uses symbols we cannot interpret, and the interpretation given by the child, does not help.

Very often children's drawings are used in psychotherapy. With the help of the drawing we can become familiar with physical, intellectual, emotional and social level of the child's development, and it enables the child to develop his abilities.

When drawing, a child plays and speaks using a specific language where some signs and symbols have universal meaning and are easy to recognize, however, there are some individual signs and symbols, whose meaning we can find out only with the help of a child and by knowing his life.

A child's drawing, at first, is just scribbling, a physical activity and has no intention at all. Later, a drawing can reveal a richness of a child's imagination and inner life. Values and richness of a child's drawing should be sensed by educators, and in order to be able to interpret it, they need to learn a speech of artistic signs which are fuller, more informative and more powerful than the speech itself.

The way a child draws reveals his temperament as well. Shy children draw thin lines, while more energetic children press a pen on the paper. Imaginative children like to draw

circles and gentle forms such as clouds, smoke coming from a chimney, treetops, and a lively child loves angles, straight lines, such as pointed trees.

A child, by an arrangement of the elements on the paper, reveals and gives information about his or someone else's status in the environment. For example, by a composition closer to the left corner of the paper a child expresses attachment to the mother, past; and if it is closer to the right, future, closeness and safety by the father. A drawing placed in the middle of the paper reveals someone who is sure in himself.

By analyzing children's works it is noticed that children using colors, their emotion, actually talk in their own way and symbolic. Outgoing and lively children use warmer colors. Gentle, calm children with some problems, use colder colors in higher percent, which is the result of the situation they are in.

Symbols play a huge role in communication of a child with the environment. By analyzing children's drawings, we can see that children mostly use and artistically speak, and in the process they reveal their joys, sorrows, fears, that is, their conditions.

It has been noticed that one of the most common details, "the sun", very often, in the child's sub consciousness, can be a symbol of the father, but it can also present emotional stability and safety. Its distance or closeness, color, size, indicates need for more frequent communication and closeness with the father.

The house is a symbol of the mother. The roof, if painted in a very red color, can be related to the aggression directed towards the character of the mother, the door, closed by a padlock, presents fear from others, and the child wants communication and a game with the children of his age.

Wide open windows, with flowers on them, emit their message differently, from the small and closed, which talk about the fear from others.

It is also noticed that a leaf which is falling, slightly romantic in a child's artistic expression, talks more about a fear of loneliness, a wish of a child to be always protected and close to his parents. Flowers, which basically represent joy, painted in a very red color, are indicators of aggression, a reflection for repression of present aggression, as well as the wish to get rid of it.

A teacher has to keep in mind that the development of a child is intensive, and that intensity, in particular, defines the quality of luck which a child will, as an individual, experience later in his life.

If a child is prevented from discovering beauty, to communicate artistically and manipulate materials from his environment, he will become unsatisfied and that will follow him through the rest of his life. Not all children's artistic products contain artistic-aesthetic and original value, but majority of them still have authentic, undisturbed child's artistic expression, creative trait, and first of all a communicative note.

Children's artistic works are sincere and spontaneous, without lies, making up; a child expresses his attitude towards

the environment, situation he is in, persons, events, objects he communicates with.

He expresses emotional experiences and wishes through a drawing using individual symbols, which are always in direct relation with life, which means that a child puts in a drawing his wishes, aspirations, visions, different feelings such as love, friendship, hatred, envy, irritations, depression. In a free drawing, a child always puts the things that either most attract him or repulse him. The things he is attracted to, he puts at front, and uses very bright colors, and the things he finds repulsive, usually draws very small and with the dark colors.

Impulsive and energetic children draw boldly, while frightened draw very thin and insecure lines, framing the drawing or drawing in the corner of the paper. A child's paintings and drawings show his most secret fears which are very difficult to express by words. A drawing is a basic mean to express his sorrow, discomfort, joy, fear or to ask for help in a very specific way.

Most of the therapists who work with children consider a drawing an effective therapeutic approach because it helps children to express in various ways which are not able with the speech. Instruments were made based on which is possible to scientifically approach to a child's drawing, but the most important thing is to appreciate a child's visual-artistic way of communication in its full richness, uniqueness, complexity and spontaneity. By drawing children send messages to their parents, teachers and the environment, so it is very important to understand the things they draw. The best way to help them is to understand them. A drawing is a safe way of communication with a child; as such it should be used whenever there is a chance.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Children, the same as they learn the numbers, alphabet, common words, start drawing and writing in order to express their very complex thoughts. A child's drawing is an expression of a child's life and communication with the outside world.

Besides that, a child's drawing in the preschool age and later, is a shape of creative expression of a child. Adults need to comprehend and understand a child's drawing and the messages which children send using them. In order to be able to succeed in that they should be educated in communication via artistic symbols.

„A child when drawing plays and speaks “[2].

A child's speech through a drawing is more sincere than when he speaks.

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