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## **CREATING TOGETHERNESS AND BUILDING A PRESCHOOL COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS: THE ROLE OF PLAY AND GAMES**

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### Abstract

This small-scale explorative study presented here is part of a broader ongoing research project that seeks to deepen our understanding of the dynamics of a preschool group in the process of becoming a community of learners. The presentation deals with two issues, which depict the main research questions of the study: What is the role of play and games in creating togetherness and building a community in a preschool group? What is the role of children and what is the role of teachers in this process? These issues were examined from five viewpoints: time, space and participation; entertainment games and pedagogical games; playfulness and playful actions; rule games; and replica and role play. In addition, two other issues were touched upon and will be discussed here: In what way do children's peer culture and formal preschool culture interconnect in play and games? In what way do cultural meaning and personal sense of activity interconnect in play and games? The study was carried out by observing preschool life in a group of 29 five- to six-year-old children and their four teachers. The findings show that in play and games different strategies can be used for creating togetherness and building a community, depending, for instance, on the type of play, the composition of the play group, the pedagogical views of the teacher, the situation and the personal interests of each participant. In addition to a diversity of strategies, the participants using these strategies are also diverse. It is important for the teacher both to recognize and to utilize this knowledge so that through play and games a good learning environment can be available to every child and to the entire group of children. A good learning environment not only gives rise to and strengthens togetherness but also builds up, maintains and develops the community of learners.

The study presented here is part of a broader ongoing research project that seeks to deepen our understanding of the dynamics of a preschool group in the process of becoming a community of learners. Of particular interest in this project is the notion of togetherness, since togetherness seems to be both a significant prerequisite for the formation of a community of learners and an important factor for meaningful learning on the part of individual children. Togetherness itself might not promote learning or the appropriation of any particular learning content, but it may enable individuals to build the social skills and attitude needed for learning in a community (Hännikäinen 2001, 2003; Hännikäinen & van Oers 2002; van Oers & Hännikäinen 2001).

## **TOGETHERNESS**

There is no precise definition or operationalisation of the notion of togetherness. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2003, p. 1747) defines it as "**the pleasant feeling you have when you are part of a group of people who have a close relationship with each other**". Broadly speaking, togetherness is connected with **positive social relations**. It stands **for affiliation** and **shared identity**, a sense of we-ness embedded in sociocultural activities. At the personal level human togetherness is always linked to **affects**, to a feeling of belonging to a group and to the feeling that one wants to remain a member of the group. Togetherness might be understood as a feeling that people create together, perhaps again and again, in midst of their activity (Hännikäinen & van Oers 1999, 2002; van Oers & Hännikäinen

2001).

Unlike related issues such as affiliation and friendship between children, togetherness has seldom been recognized or considered in the research literature and has almost never been an explicit research theme. There exist, however, many studies of young children's friendships, peer relationships and peer culture (e.g., Corsaro 1997; Dunn 1993; Howes 1996; Thorell 1998) in which togetherness has been touched upon. A more direct focus on togetherness can be found in the studies by Hatch (1986) and Hännikäinen (1999) as well as in a special collection of papers (see van Oers & Hännikäinen 2001) on the beginnings of togetherness among young children (Rayna 2001), young children's language of togetherness (de Haan & Singer 2001), playfulness as a sign of togetherness (Hännikäinen 2001), togetherness and diversity in joint play between blind and sighted children (Janson 2001), as well as peer culture and friendship relationships as contexts for the development of pro-social behavior (Avgitidou 2001) and conflict management in preschoolers (Sánchez Medina, Martínez Lozano & Goudena 2001), in both cases seen from the viewpoint of togetherness. This project is a continuation to these studies.

To experience togetherness seems not to be dependent on the kind of activity which is shared. An earlier study conducted in daycare centres (Hännikäinen 1999) showed how manifestations of togetherness are present in all kind of activities during the day: in adult-initiated, structured activities, such as circle time, learning sessions,

gymnastics, drawing, painting and handicrafts and in routine activities, like mealtimes, dressing and undressing, resting and naps. However, joint play and games are activities in which togetherness is almost invariably present.

The individual manifestations of togetherness among young children found in many of the studies mentioned above could be classified into at least three broader categories: (1) togetherness related to emotions, empathy and loyalty, (2) togetherness related to special attention to each other, and (3) togetherness related to cooperation. The categories are partly overlapping, and all of them include both verbal and non-verbal communication. As found in the studies, togetherness *related to emotions, empathy and loyalty* is manifested, for instance, by expressions of joy for and with others, praising, comforting, conciliating and encouraging one another, hugging, touching and ‘sticking’ physically to each other or enjoying being 'naughty' together. Togetherness *related to special attention to each other* is manifested, for instance, by pointing out similarities in appearance and experiences, confirming others’ points of view or expressing identical views. Togetherness *related to co-operation* is manifested, for instance, by joining in others' activities, negotiating and planning joint activities or creating and sharing rules. These manifestations of togetherness were also observed in a study examining the strategies employed by a group of six-year-old primary school pupils and their teacher to maintain togetherness in a school context while composing a joint story (Hännikäinen & van Oers 1999, 2001).

## COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS

Although it is obvious that different types of communities of learners exist, they seem to have some similarities (e.g., Lee, Ng & Jacobs 1998; Matusov 2001; Rogoff, Goodman Turkanis & Bartlett 2001; Rogoff, Matusov & White 1996; see also Hännikäinen & van Oers 1999). In general, a community of learners can be defined **as a group of people with similar interests and goals and with a certain intersubjectivity, i.e. joint understanding, of what the group is doing and learning**. Such a group's members are also united by a common ground of knowledge, attitudes and feelings. A community of learners typically displays a distributed form of intelligence, differences in skills, knowledge and experiences, that produces its outcomes by discussing and negotiating its diverse meanings (e.g. Bruffee 1993; Salomon 1993).

**In a community of learners all the members play an active role in shared endeavours, although particular roles may vary from one community or one situation to another** (Rogoff 1994). Both the children and teacher are involved in these activities - in different ways, but in all cases with a sense of responsibility. The teacher has a double role (Matusov 2001). On the one hand she or he has a guiding and monitoring role. This is necessary for educational reasons, centred on the teacher's responsibility of ensuring that all members of the group can learn from the

joint experience. On the other hand, the teacher is also considered to be an active member of the group taking her or his share in the negotiation of meaning. This is necessary for the constitution of a community of learners with distributed intelligence (Salomon 1993). All members of the community are learners. The teacher learns, for instance, how children learn, and by doing so she or he learns to scaffold the children so that learning is meaningful for them.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

As the findings of the project have shown, a diversity of strategies are used by children and teachers to keep the group together, and to engender, maintain and strengthen a feeling of togetherness in preschool (Hännikäinen 2003, 2005). Many of the strategies are connected to play and games.

This article deals with two topics, which depict the main research questions of the study: **What is the role of play and games in creating togetherness and building a community in a preschool group? What is the role of children and what is the role of teachers in this process?** These topics were examined from five perspectives: **1) time, space and participation, 2) entertainment games and pedagogical games, 3) playfulness and playful actions, 4) rule games and 5) replica and role play.**

**As members of a community of learners, children are living simultaneously in two cultures: in the formal preschool culture and in their own peer culture.** The preschool culture is connected to the aims and functions of education in the society. In this culture teachers have a special position owing to the ‘pedagogical and didactic contract’ that is intrinsically linked to their work as a teacher: it is a teacher’s task to educate and teach children in preschool and to create the necessary conditions for achieving these aims. In the peer culture, children are the protagonists: the children’s peer culture is characterized by their own rituals, routines and ways of being and acting as children (e.g., Corsaro 1997) regardless of the societal functions of the preschool or of what, how or why the teachers guide and teach them. However, these cultures cannot always be separated from each other. They intersect and overlap even in the same situation or activity. Building a community of learners seems to require that a feeling of togetherness be present in each of these cultures. However, previous research on the issues of togetherness or on learners’ communities has not focussed on the relationship between these cultures in play and games. This is an important objective of this study.

Already decades ago Vygotsky (e.g., 1978) took up the question of what creates a person’s attachment to joint activities. He concluded that **we cannot separate human action from the affective involvement of the person in his or her actions** (see Wertsch 1985). Leontiev (1978) later elaborated this notion by **distinguishing between cultural meaning and personal sense in an action.**

***Cultural meaning*** refers to the generalized meaning that is attached to a certain action in a given community, and ***personal sense*** refers to the relevance a person attaches to that action in the light of his or her actual motives.

However, like human action and affect, cultural meaning and personal sense are also inseparably related to each other. In this light we could assume that the personal sense which a person attaches to a sociocultural activity forms the basis for togetherness. Thus, as personal sense is strongly associated with the motive for doing an activity, it could be concluded that sharing the basic motive behind a joint activity is one of the fundamental conditions of togetherness (Hännikäinen & van Oers 1999; van Oers & Hännikäinen 2001).

**Thus, two other topics were touched upon in the study: In what way do children's peer culture and formal preschool culture interconnect in play and games? In what way do cultural meaning and personal sense of activity interconnect in play and games?**

## **SUBJECTS AND METHODS**

The study took place in a **Finnish preschool**. The term ***preschool***, as used in Finland, refers to voluntary but formal education in daycare centres or at primary

schools during the year immediately preceding compulsory schooling, which generally starts in the year the child turns seven. Thus, in Finland, unlike in most European countries, six-year-old children are still preschoolers (for more on the Finnish preschool system, see Hännikäinen 2003).

The target preschool group of the project - and thus of this study - **consisted of 29 five- to six-year-old children, four teachers**. The children were divided into three subgroups for part of the day, and the main focus of the study was the subgroup of 10 children, named **Athe Whales@**, together with their teacher. The data analysed in this study comprise situations where one or more of the children from "the Whales" were present.

The data were collected by **a multitude of ethnographic methods**, such as observations, formal and informal interviews with the teachers and children, written documents and projective methods, the **main method being reactive observations with and without video recording**. The data collection began in August, when the children's preschool year started, and continued until the Christmas holidays, when the first preschool term ended. **On the grounds of earlier studies on the development of communities of learners at school it was assumed that this length of time is needed for a preschool group to establish itself as a community.**

The data analysed in detail for this study consist of **56 hours of observations of preschool life, play constituting only part of it**. This total breaks down into **24 hours of free activities** by the children without direct adult supervision, and **32 hours of activities directed by the teacher** or teachers. The data were analyzed by applying **the inductive method**, as the analytical categories were derived from the empirical data. **The unit of analysis was a meaningful episode**. The length of individual episodes extracted from the data varied according to variation in the duration of moments and situations relating to play and games. Hence, a meaningful episode might, for instance, be a single sentence uttered by one child or an entire game played by two or more participants.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Time, space and participation**

The educational policy of the target preschool was based on the idea of giving special value to the children's own peer culture. In addition to respecting children, this was also seen as a precondition for the social cohesion of the group and building a community of learners. Hence, **every morning** the children had the first hour of the preschool day to themselves without direct adult supervision. All the rooms and most of the materials were available to the children, and they were free to choose their

activities and companions. In addition to this morning hour, the children were allowed time for free play during the **outdoor breaks**, and **another short play period** after the teacher-led learning sessions. All in all, almost 40 per cent of the preschool day was dedicated to free play and other voluntary activities by the children.

Some children, mainly a group of girls, usually spent the morning hour drawing and painting, but most of the children preferred playing. All types of play were observed. Play most often occurred in pairs or small groups. In general, the girls role played together, and the boys played rough and tumble or with replica toys, usually with small animal or fantasy characters and cars, combined with constructing objects from *Lego*. When girls and boys were playing together, they role played (acting animals or media characters) or played with small animal figures (replica play) combined with *Lego*. Thus, in these games togetherness in small - usually same-sex - groups was created and established. It was also noted that many smaller groups played physically close to each other, although only occasionally actually communicating verbally with each other.

Unfortunately, togetherness also embeds hierarchy and power relations (see Corsaro 1997). This study was no exception. Sometimes two or more children consolidated their friendship and togetherness by excluding other children from their play. All in all, the data contained 65 incidents (without a teacher being present) regarding access

to play - who is allowed or not allowed to join in a game, or who plays with whom.

The following example illustrates this issue:

Nelli to Jonna and Kaisa: “Shall we three [girls] play together during the outdoor break?”

Jonna: “Yes.”

Kaisa: “All right with me.”

Nelli: “We [three] are friends, yeah.”

When the teacher of “the Whales” was present, she was very careful not to disturb or interrupt ongoing joint play, the “interactive space” of a group (Corsaro 1997), or solitary activities engaged in by individual children. However, sometimes she intervened in the situation:

A free play session is in progress. The children are playing different games in pairs or small groups.

Otto is playing alone with some marbles.

Teacher asks: “Otto, would you like to take part in a game?”

Otto shakes his head and continues to play with his marbles.

The situation should be interpreted bearing in mind that the teacher was very familiar with the children in her group. She had noticed, and she also mentioned this in an

interview, that Otto used to play on his own, but that he also intently observed other children's play. In this extract the teacher attempts to help Otto to participate in games played by other children. However, Otto is not willing to do so.

### **Entertainment games and pedagogical games**

These games represent the formal preschool culture: they took place just before, during and after the learning sessions or they were part of circle time. Many of these games had the pedagogical aims both of creating togetherness and of building a community. Thus, during the first preschool weeks these games were led by the teacher, but later the children also played them on their own.

During the first few weeks the teacher deliberately **chose games to be played together featuring the themes of a friendship and "all of us"**. Through these games she also invited the children as a group to discuss friends, friendship and being "we, the Whales". Throughout the autumn the teacher also **insisted on the inclusion and equal participation of every child in joint games**, as shown in the next example of an entertainment game before a learning session.

It is Jonna's turn to select somebody to be the leader of the game after herself. Up till now the children have selected only their 'best' friends or according to gender, girls only girls and boys only boys.

Teacher says to Jonna: “Think, Jonna, about whether there is somebody who hasn’t been a leader yet.”

Jonna: “Jaakko.”

A little later Jaakko is selecting the next leader. He looks at the children but cannot make a decision.

Teacher asks: “Jaakko, do you see anybody who hasn’t been a leader yet?”

Another example is taken from a teacher-led pedagogical drama game. According to the teacher, the objectives were to enjoy the game and to learn collaboration, while at the same time feeling togetherness.

**The children are casting their roles for the game.**

**One role is left, and Marika is the only one without a role.**

**Marika refuses to accept the role that is still left.**

**Teacher: “Children, would you like Marika to play with us?”**

**The children: “Yes.”**

**Teacher: “Marika, perhaps you should think it over. If you don’t play now, it is possible that the other children won’t invite you to play another day. They might remember that you didn’t want to play with them today.”**

Marika still refuses to take the role.

The teacher suggests a negotiation between the children and new casting.

The children agree and a satisfactory solution is found: Jonna offers her original role to Marika and takes the left-one role.

The joint game can begin.

For the teacher, it is important that every child participates in the game. When the problem with the roles emerges, she first appeals to the children as a group and then to the child who is refusing the role, and finally again to the group. Negotiation leads to a satisfactory solution, although Jonna has to sacrifice herself for the common good by giving up her original, pleasing role.

### **Playfulness and playful actions**

Playfulness and playful actions are clear manifestations of children's own peer culture. Playful actions resemble play; they are free, process-oriented and creative and they include fantasy, playing with ideas and images, dramatic gestures, humour and laughter. The children give their imagination free reign, which brings them joy and fun. Playfulness and playful actions are a way to communicate, express positive feelings one to the other, and experience togetherness (Hännikäinen, de Jong & Rubinstein Reich 1997).

The children of "the Whales" built togetherness, for instance, **by verbal nonsense:**

**playing with words and exaggerating.** They enjoyed themselves by reciting and singing **naughty poems and songs** and by **horseplay**: crashing into each other and jostling, jumping and falling down on each other. The children also expressed togetherness by happily **yelling and shrieking** wildly when they got something they wanted. Sometimes the teacher even encouraged this kind of almost ecstatic behaviour (see also Hännikäinen 2003).

### **Rule games**

Rule games in this preschool had two functions: on one hand the children played joint rule games on their own, just for fun, manifesting their peer culture. On the other hand, rule games were used as means of cognitive and social learning. These games were teacher-organized and manifested the formal preschool culture. The teacher saw to it that the games were played strictly according to the rules of the game and to the behavioural rules of the preschool.

The behavioural rules of the preschool aimed at teaching children good manners and respect for each other, but also at keeping the playing group together, thus directly contributing to the social cohesion of the group and the feeling of togetherness. These rules regarding games were 1) **a game must be played to the very end**, 2) **the winner also remains behind and encourages the players left** and 3) **the game must be played fairly**. In an interview the teacher stated that she considered these

rules to be important in practicing collaboration and building a community of learners (Hännikäinen 2005). Also the children emphasized the importance of fair play, as the following example illustrates:

The children are playing a game, called "Toadstool". One child should pick up as many "mushrooms" (bean bags lying on the floor) as possible and try to avoid picking up the "toadstool" - a bean bag which the other children nominate by gesturing is the "toadstool". The decision is made while the target child is briefly stationed behind a screen. When his turn comes, Joel picks up one "mushroom" after the other with a firm grip. His basket begins to fill, but the "toadstool" is still untouched on the floor.

The other children begin to suspect him of cheating: "Joel has been peeping ... hey, he has seen [the bag that was designated the toadstool] ... you're not allowed to peep."

Joel: "No, I wasn't peeping."

The children ask the observer (the author of this article) to say whether Joel had been peeping or not. When the observer confirms that Joel did not peep, the game continues (see Hännikäinen 2005).

Sometimes the children found the teacher-organized rule games dull. **To make the games more meaningful to themselves - to invest the game with personal sense - the children resorted to playfulness:** for instance, while playing board games they

arranged the pieces in a pleasing order on the table, made towers of them, or gave them roles (“a mother”, “a baby”) and invented new meanings for them (“look, this is a cigar”). By so doing the children expressed their creativity and humour but also their joint feelings: we play the game because we have to, but when we do, we use all the freedom we have. This illustrates one particular way in which the children attached their peer culture to the formal preschool culture.

### **Replica and role play**

Replica and role play was another important arena among “the Whales” for creating, maintaining and developing togetherness. This was apparent both **in the actual relationships** between the children - that is, how the children negotiated the play and how they communicated outside the play - and **in role relationships** - that is, what the role characters were doing or saying inside the play. The following examples taken from separate games show how the children negotiated their play by emphasizing the shared nature of the game and the togetherness of the group:

“This house belongs to all of us, doesn’t it?”

“Hi, should we put our ideas for building it together?”

“These [dolls] would be children who belong to all of us, is it ok?”

Very often the theme of friendship, solidarity and caring was inserted into the content

of the game:

**Four children are playing with small toy animals.**

**Ossi in an animal voice to Marika: AYou can visit us.@**

**Marika in her own voice: AYes, all these [animals] were good friends [with each other].@**

**Ossi in his own voice: AYes, although these [animals] sometimes fight with each other, they all were good friends.@**

**Toni in his own voice: AYes, they are friends.@**

The examples presented above demonstrate that the activities which the children are involved in have personal sense for them. The children are motivated in the activity; they are doing what they like to do; they are developing plots and play actions peaceably together and they show consideration and respect for each other. However, the examples do not explicitly show how the games represent the peer culture, the preschool culture or their confluence. This will be illustrated by an extract from a school game.

**In December, after having been ‘preschoolers’ for about four months, the children began to play “proper school”.** Here we take a closer look at this game (see also Hännikäinen 2005). The game took place during the last day of observation in the preschool, just before Christmas. **At the beginning of the game five children**

were involved - some of them from “the Whales”, some from the other groups - and by the end, 25 minutes later, twelve. The teacher was not present.

Before >school= begins, the >teacher= Anna arranges the tables and chairs in a suitable way (*preschool culture*). The ‘teacher’ asks the >pupils= to come to >school= with papers and pens (*a practical solution outside the preschool culture*). Soon the first >pupils= sit behind the tables looking at the ‘teacher’ (*preschool culture*). The ‘teacher’ asks their names, one after the other (*preschool culture*) and then she says: AOkay, we have begun the first grade and we don=t have school today ... but you can start with a short break outside, and then the first teachings [sic] will begin ... you can have a ‘recess’ (*school culture outside the preschool culture*).”

(...)

After the break the ‘teacher’ announces: AWe=ll begin with maths (*preschool culture*) ... how much is four times four (*school culture outside the preschool culture*)?” The >pupils= hold up their hands and the ‘teacher’ gives permission to answer (*preschool culture*).

(...)

The ‘teacher’ praises the >pupils=: AThat’s correct, fine ... so write a [number] four on your papers ... everyone writes (*preschool culture*).”

The ‘teacher’ accepts diversity in abilities: AWell, that too can be a four (*preschool culture*).”

The >pupils= advise each other: Look, do it first like this (*preschool culture*)”.

(...)

After the maths lesson a literacy lesson begins. The ‘teacher’ says: AWell ... let=s ask about letters now ... what is the first letter in your name (*preschool culture*)?” The >pupils= hold up their hands, and if somebody forgets to do it, another >pupil= issues a reminder (*preschool culture*).

The ‘teacher’ encourages collaboration: “If you can’t do it, you can ask the others (*preschool culture*).”

(...)

The ‘teacher’ asks the ‘pupils’ to write AMerry Christmas” on a Christmas card. She points at a written text on the wall and says: AThere is a model for you (*preschool culture*).”

‘New pupils’ come to the ‘school’, including some boys who begin horseplay in the ‘classroom’ (*peer culture*). The ‘teacher’ and some ‘pupils’ scold the boys: “Running in the room is not allowed (*preschool culture*).”

The ‘teacher’ threatens the rowdy boys with punishment: ASoon you will be kept behind after school (*school culture outside the preschool culture*) and you won=t be allowed to go outside during the break if you go on misbehaving (*Anna’s belief of school culture?*).”

The ‘teacher’ gives the >pupils= homework: AWell, at home ... you can draw your house (*preschool culture*).”

(...)

**‘Next day’ the ‘teacher’ asks the ‘pupils’ to take the same seats”**

***(preschool culture).***

**A ‘pupil’ comes in: AI apologize for being a bit late (*good practice outside the preschool culture*).”**

(...)

**The school game comes to an end and a real learning session begins. The**

**‘teacher’ tidies up the room. The children decide to continue the game in**

**the afternoon.**

## **FINAL COMMENTS**

Playing together in pairs or groups was do doubt one of the strongest expressions of *personal sense in action* and of the children=s peer culture. But so were general playfulness, shared silliness and humour. Children built togetherness by having fun together, for instance, by verbal nonsense: playing with words, exaggerating, and by reciting and singing naughty poems and songs.

In practice, the preschool culture and the children’s peer culture are inseparable. For instance, in the school game presented above, it was possible to observe practices and actions adopted from the preschool culture (e.g., learning maths and literacy as school subjects), revealing that the children **had appropriated the preschool culture and**

**grasped the *cultural meaning* of school activity.**

There were also **elements, like manners and beliefs, that the children had brought into the game from outside the preschool context**, for instance, from older children (e.g., a teacher threatening pupils with punishment was not a normal mode in the preschool).

The game of playing school also illustrates the ways in which the **children together created a zone of proximal development by exceeding their everyday performance**. The children were “a head taller than themselves” (see Vygotsky 1976, 552). In acting out the behaviour that the teacher expected of them in real life they did so as members of a preschool community of learners. For instance, during the real preschool learning sessions the children often forgot to hold up their hands when wishing to speak. In the game they even reminded each other of this convention. The ‘teacher’ was not needed for this. The zone of proximal development was evident also in the language that the ‘teacher’ used; it was close to the language of their real teacher, regarding both grammar and vocabulary. Further, the game shows that the children knew how to behave in a culturally correct manner. They acted out good habits and they were polite to each other. This was not always the case during the real learning sessions.

Finally, the children **attached their *peer culture, affect and personal sense* to this activity**. They shared the basic motive behind a joint activity: **they wanted to play**

**school, even when almost everything they did ‘at school’ was the same as what they did daily in the preschool. It was fun to play school together, belong to the same group, and experience togetherness.** Because playing school established itself as children’s game just at the end of the autumn term, it could be assumed that togetherness of the preschoolers was beginning to change into the togetherness of future schoolchildren. Real school would begin in half a year.

All in all, the findings of this study reveal a rather complicated interweaving of phenomena and concepts related to the notion on togetherness even in the context of play and games. It is evident that there is no uniform way to create togetherness and build a community of learners by means of play and games. Many different strategies can be used for this purpose, depending, for instance, on the type of play, the composition of the play group, the pedagogical views and activities of the teacher, the immediate situation and the personal interests and motives of each participant. Hence, in addition to a diversity of strategies, the participants using these strategies are also diverse. It is important for the teacher both to recognize and to utilize this knowledge so that through play and games a good learning environment can be available to every child and to the entire group of children. A good learning environment not only gives rise to and strengthens togetherness but also builds up, maintains and develops the community of learners.

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