

## APPLICATION OF POETRY WORKSHOPS IN KINDERGARTEN

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The paper presents experiences and results of applying poetry workshops in working with preschool children in Preschool institution in Zrenjanin..” Poet among children – children among poems” is name of project within which implemented three poetic workshops. The first is called “I want to tell you something”, the second ” “ Both children and poets are looking for beauty” and the third “ Both children and poets love to play”. Goal of these workshops is enrichment of social environment and cultural context of child and encouraging speech - language, cognitive and social development of children and creativity.

This goal is achieved through listening to the poet who speaks his poetry, talking about feelings, thoughts, actions that poetry evokes in children and through children’s creation. Children could express themselves with drawings, words, movement .The results of these workshops were poetry that have been thought up, children's message to the world and adults, poetry listening skills that children developed and the books written by the poet who spent time with children.

Children from these workshops had the following welfare: they developed and refined ability to communicate with peers and adults; were motivated and actively involved in listening , thinking and creating poems ; have developed auditory attention; have enriched their vocabulary . Children were released, smiling and happy, they were impatiently expected workshops . This was a pleasant and exciting experience for all participants.

***Key words:*** *poetry, children, kindergarten, vocabulary, workshop*

“They are rich in all that they do not have, rich in admiration for everything possible. But no imagination can nourish itself. Children’s spirit seeks nourishment, because the kids do not live by bread alone.”

**PAUL HAZARD**

### **Introduction**

In Serbia, poetry is an integral part of the daily kindergarten curriculum, but not particularly isolated area of pedagogical – educational work.

The poems and songs are an essential part of the life in kindergarten: songs welcome children, songs farewell children, poems put them to sleep and wake them up. Children’s art poems and songs, and folk art, birthday songs – songs all around the child! We can say that the child takes a bath in the songs in kindergarten.

We agree with the authors who believe that children instinctively respond to poetry, these responds are innate. Children have natural affinity for poetry, maybe hard-wired to musical language – taking pleasure in the rhythm, rhyme, repetition (Styles et al., 2010). Poetry and music are an inseparable part of daily interactions and activities that have the potential to improve children's cognitive, speech - language and socio - emotional development. While children play mobile games, singing or reciting, develop both body and memory and awareness of each other.

Socio - cultural perspective on early childhood determines as the most important characteristic of a small child’s environment - people with whom the child maintains close relationships: parents, guardians, siblings, peers. They give meaning to the experiences of the child, they introduce children to acquire the skills and methods of communication (Woodhead, 2007, Richard & Light, 1986, Schaffer, 1996).

### **Theoretical framework**

Theoretical framework of this paper and our poetry workshops is the original teaching of Lev Vygotsky, his culture historical theory (Vigotski, 1996). Vygotsky puts the general problem of mental development of the child in the context of mutual relations between the biological and social, natural and historical, natural and cultural. Social environment is the source of development, not just a factor. The focus of the workshop is human relationship, the relationship between children and adults, mutual relations of children and mutual relations of adults. This relationship is constantly alive, bidirectional - child and adult are one world, they

constantly share thoughts, feelings, share life, mutually enriching. In the common life of children and adults every situation is an incentive for building relationships. Experiences are exchanged and each participant in the exchange is a win-win. From human relationships are born questions and answers, nothing is black or white, each part requires that once it becomes a whole. Each question requires an answer and every answer gives rise to a question: through questions and answers life happens.

### **Message for adults**

It is important that adults have in mind that the development of children is joint activity of children and adults. If you have enough patience, courage and sensitivity to see and listen to the children, we hear the voices of the future.

### **Preschool institution tradition and enrichment of the cultural context**

Preschool institution in Zrenjanin has tradition of 158 years. A very important area of activity of preschool is systematic and continuous enrichment of the cultural context in which children sustained. In the last 30 years, theater plays in kindergarten, children watch the show in the theater, guests are poets, musicians, painters, sculptors, ballet performances... Children have the opportunity to watch artists paint, sculpt, to learn how to make puppets and theater performances. And the children itself sculpt, paint, think up verses. For some children first encounter with culture: books, paintings, musical instruments, theater play, is just in kindergarten. Their lives are enriched and made beautiful, given a new meaning.

### **Why poetry workshops?**

In this text we want to emphasize the importance and role of poetry in socio-emotional, speech - language and cognitive child development. We want to promote respect for poetry, and encourage its creation. We believe what is important for the child at the present stage of its development has deeper meaning for a child. At all times, the most important and also the most difficult task in raising the child is - to help him find the meaning of life. To achieve this, it is necessary a lot of experience of growth. Developing, the child must step by step, learn to understand yourself better; thereby becomes more able to understand the other people... (Bettelheim, 1976).

We believe what Bettelheim said for fairy Tales goes for poetry, too. Reading poetry and talking to children about the rhyme we encourage feelings, imagination and intellect mutually support and enrich. Thus develops the inner wealth of people ((Bettelheim, 1976).

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Author and producer of poetry workshops is psychologist and children’s poet Olgica Babic – Bjelic. This article describes experiences gained through reciting poetry to children, which, among other things, motivate children to talk about the big issues in the children’s lives: the family, the envy brother / sister, the fear, the sadness, the game, the contest. Children are able to through songs and talking about them discover the world and the truth about the relationships among people.

In the period from 2008. to 2016. was held 30 poetry workshops, which involved 532 children aged from 4 to 7 g and 46 teachers.

### **Workshop “I want to tell you something”**

Children and poet talk about what each of them would like to tell someone. Children wanted to say something to mother, father, sister, brother, teacher, friend, fireman, Santa Claus, grandmother. Then the children and poet together thought this song:

“I want to tell you something about life,  
about love, trees, the rain, the cat:  
to preserve this beauty, not to forget.”

Children were talking about what they saw in nature, what they heard, experienced, felt. Here are some of the children's testimony: “ I saw an eagle flying high.” “I saw ostrich”, I was playing in the pool”, “My dad has fulfilled a long-standing promise”, “My grandfather came back from afar.”

Whereas some kids did not know all the words, we explained them and then we drew and wrote vocabulary words that we heard at the workshop: eagle; ostrich; a long-standing promise; from afar.

We agree with the authors who say that children may not understand all the words or meaning, but they felt the rhythms, got curious about what the sounds mean (Styles et al., 2010).

The children enjoyed in the pronunciation of unfamiliar words, listened to how they sound, they laugh when they say incorrectly, there was no ridicule.

Each child with verses “I want to tell you something” was announcing what he wants, expressing their feelings using facial expressions, tone of voice, strength of voice and body movements. They exchanged feelings, thoughts, enjoy the fellowship that they experience when recognized the same joys, sorrows, fears, what is funny and entertaining. Poetry helped children know each other and build community.

Children ask poet to create a new poem, for them only, and it is next poem:

**You don't have to sing like a bird**

**You can sing of heroes**

**You can sing of meadows**

**Poem has a power**

**To open a window to the world**

**You can read poetry**

**You can write poetry**

**You don't have to sing like a bird**

After that, in leisure activities, the children invent music on the text and sang, drumming, whistling a tune.

### **Workshop “Both children and poets are looking for beauty”**

The poet brought mysterious objects in the bag of surprises: sculpture made of ebony, which represented women with tiny braids; rattle made of coconut; shell; chalk; clay pots, the old 5000, which the children played. The children were curious, they wanted to peek in the bag. But,, poet asked them to have patience. The poet speaks to children: "Children, have you ever heard the word beauty?"

Here are some of the children's testimony: “Beauty is when you're beautiful; when you're good; nature can be beautiful, house, fountain, we, pets, heart and soul, as my mother says.”

“Can we see the beauty? Can we hear the beauty? Can we smell the beauty? Can we touch the beauty?”

Some children were joyfully exclaimed: You brought in the bag something nice! The bag is open and talked about each of the items. This was an excellent opportunity to carefully inspect objects, touch, to feel the smoothness, the hardness of wood, heat, to see color shine. Some words that describe these properties were unknown, but they were explained and added to the dictionary-children with drawing.

The poet shows children the shell and order, and asked: "What is common to them?" Some children triumphantly shout: "They are made of lime!", and some of them naturally lean the shell on the ear, to hear the sound of the sea. Children are truly enjoying the use of maracas made from coconut, asking questions about how it is done.

The reactions of children to the offered activities and items: curiosity, surprise, delight. Everyone wants to keep the objects in his hand, to use them, some are impatient. This is an opportunity for the poet to say: "Today we are learning patience. Continuously learn patience. I know it's hard to resist the desire to take it now. It's hard yes, but we'll wait our turn .."

The opportunity was there and talk about different tastes. One boy said that the sculpture is ugly. Some think it is beautiful, some think it is ugly. Tastes are different. If we do not like something, we will not be rude and insulting those who like it. A special delight provoked clay pots. Poet asked children: "What do you think, what they are made of?" Children said: of wood, of stone. Poet said: "They are lightweight and sturdy, like wood and stone. But, they are made of clay." Children said: "And we are making objects of clay, it's fun." Poet: "What do you mean, where I got a bucket?" Children: "You bought them in a museum." It was an opportunity to talk about the museum exhibit items that are not sold. When they heard that the items found people who plowed the land, that they are 5000 years old, children were amazed. It was an opportunity to talk about the passing of time, the history, and how we can save the beauty for next generations.

The children at home enthusiastically recounted the content of the workshops, even those that do not normally do.

**Workshop “ Both children and poets love to play.”**

The poet first talked with the children about what the children play with (dolls, cubes for construction dice, toy cars, balls). After that, they agreed that children can play with words, just as poets do.

Then each child took his favorite toy and could, at its option, draw a toy, think of a song about it or play with it.

**Vladimir’s poem**

**Small excavator, small excavator,**

Small excavator, small excavator

Why do you dig?

Because the broken pipe

So after I fill it.

**Ljiljana’s poem**

**Baby, baby, baby**

Baby, baby, baby,

Where are you, baby?

If you’re not here,

I will look for you in my dreams.

**Mario’s poem**

**Mascot, mascot**

Mascot, mascot,

Why you love sports?

Because I feel good

And because I’m in charge.

Children very carefully listened to poems that were written by their comrades and wanted to learn them by heart. Of course, the poet taught them by heart, too. Goal of these workshops was enrichment of social environment and cultural context of child and encouraging speech - language, cognitive and social development of children and creativity. This goal is achieved through listening to the poet who speaks his poetry, talking about feelings, thoughts, actions that poetry evokes in children and through children's creation. Children expressed themselves with drawings, words, movement. The results of these workshops were poetry that have been thought up, children's message to the world and adults, poetry listening skills that children developed and the books written by the poet who spent time with children.

Children from these workshops had the following welfare: they developed and refined ability to communicate with peers and adults; were motivated and actively involved in listening, thinking and creating poems; have developed auditory attention; have enriched their vocabulary. Children were released, smiling and happy, they were impatiently expected. The workshop was attended by several children with disabilities and children with different levels of speech - language development. Each of them, in their own way, participated in the work, without interfering workshop's flow.

This was a pleasant and exciting experience for all participants.

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