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## AXIOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Educația axiologică în copilăria timpurie

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## AXIOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

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### Abstract

Education is the fundamental element that contributes to transmitting values from a very early age. Education based on the promotion of values at an early age is essential because this is when the most significant changes in a child's life occur, especially regarding character formation and socioemotional development. Axiological education involves the transmission of ethical principles through daily activities, interactions with others and the organisation of the educational environment. Early childhood practitioners can adjust children's values and behaviours in a desired direction based on their principles and values. Both parents and teachers have a significant role in transmitting the values and shaping children's sociomoral skills and developing them. It is well-known that axiological guidance begins in family,

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from the child's earliest years, and continues in school and social environments into which the child will be integrated. The axiological approach facilitates children's understanding and appreciation of concepts such as respect, truth, responsibility, kindness and empathy, providing the foundation for long-term harmonious development and well-balanced interpersonal relationships. Through active involvement in various axiologically oriented games and activities, children will be able to differentiate truth from lies, right from wrong, beautiful from ugly, acquiring sociomoral norms, principles and behaviours. The values nurtured in childhood will shape the character and provide the basis for later adult personality. This study highlights the importance of addressing core values at an early age and provides examples of good practices in implementing axiological education in kindergarten.

**Keywords:** axiological education, character, early childhood education, personality, values.

### **Rezumat**

*Educația este factorul esențial care contribuie la transmiterea valorilor încă de la vârste fragede. Educația bazată pe promovarea valorilor la vârstele timpurii este deosebit de importantă, deoarece în această perioadă au loc cele mai ample transformări din viața copilului, mai ales în ceea ce privește formarea caracterului și dezvoltarea socioemoțională.*

*Educația axiologică presupune transmiterea unor principii etice prin intermediul activităților zilnice, interacțiunilor cu ceilalți și organizării mediului educațional. Profesioniștii din educația timpurie pot ajusta valorile și comportamentele copiilor într-o direcție dorită, bazându-se pe propriile lor principii și valori personale. Atât părinții, cât și cadrele didactice dețin un rol hotărâtor în transmiterea valorilor, în formarea și dezvoltarea deprinderilor sociomorale ale copiilor. Este bine cunoscut faptul că orientarea axiologică începe în familie, încă din primii ani de viață ai copilului și continuă în mediile școlare și sociale în care acesta va fi integrat.*

*Abordarea axiologică facilitează înțelegerea și aprecierea de către copii a unor concepte precum respectul, adevărul, responsabilitatea, bunătatea, empatia, asigurând fundamentul unei dezvoltări armonioase și a unor relații interpersonale echilibrate pe termen lung. Prin implicarea activă în diverse jocuri și activități orientate axiologic, copiii vor fi capabili să diferențieze adevărul de minciună, binele de rău, frumosul de urât, însușindu-și norme, principii și comportamente sociomorale. Valorile insuflate în copilărie vor contura caracterul și vor asigura bazele personalității adultului de mai târziu.*

*Studiul de față aduce în atenție importanța abordării valorilor la vârstele timpurii și oferă exemple de bune practici privind implementarea educației axiologice în grădiniță.*

*Cuvinte-cheie: caracter, educația axiologică, educația timpurie, personalitate, valori.*

## 1. Introduction

Education is an act of generous and intentional love for the soul of the other, intending to develop the other's full receptivity to values and the ability to fulfil them (Spranger, 1922).

Education is a complex process, involving a set of educational actions built on scientific knowledge at different levels, using multiple teaching strategies, assessment methods and technologies. These elements can change, combine and complement each other, focusing the attention of teachers on pupils in the sphere of creation and pedagogical responsibility.

In this context, values are particularly important as a goal and an effective instrument for education, not only in the family, but also in the education system and in society. The knowledge and appreciation of values constitute one of the essential milestones for the humanization of the child and the progressive development of its creative, psychological and social potential (Cuznețov, 2010).

We live in a world in which moral and social values are becoming less and less defined, priorities and ideologies are changing, which is why children's education must become increasingly oriented towards values from an early age. Learning begins at birth and continues throughout life. Thus, early education becomes the child's first stepping-stone to prepare them for entry into the mandatory education system, around the age of 6/7 (Albulescu, 2019).

Early education includes all the individual and social experiences, whether spontaneous or organised, that children benefit from in their early years (0-6/7 years). These experiences are designed to develop the human being, providing specific physical, mental and cultural skills, capacities and acquisitions, as well as identity and dignity. The period of childhood, especially preschool, is the foundation of children's formation, development and value orientation, providing the basis for complex physical, cognitive, socioemotional and cultural development.

In the Curriculum for Early Childhood Education, 2019, there are only a few elements about moral education, which are circumscribed to the Domain of Socioemotional Development, where social relations are presented from the perspective of both child-child and child-adult interactions. It also focuses on children's self-perception, social relationships, self-control and managing emotions, as well as the development of the child's self-esteem.

The preschool age is the most favourable period for acquiring the fundamental tools of knowledge and communication, for the formation of moral and character traits, and for further preparation regarding later school and social life, which is why the role of teachers and significant adults in children's lives is essential in the process of their growth and development.

### 1.1. Promoting axiological education in a social context

Axiological education refers to education through and for values. Education for values refers to those educational practices through which children acquire skills and form competencies on values (Halstead & Taylor, 2000). Taking as premises the higher values of education - the Good, the True, the Beautiful, educational researchers have developed different taxonomies of values.

B. Şerbănescu (2000) suggests the following classification of values:

- material and physical values: health, comfort, security;
- economic values: productivity, efficiency;
- moral values: honesty, fairness;
- social values: philanthropy, honesty;
- political/ civic values: freedom, equality, justice;
- aesthetic values: beauty, symmetry, harmony;
- intellectual values: intelligence, clarity;
- professional values: consideration, professional success;
- sentimental values: love.

In terms of the relationship between education and values, O. Reboul (1992) offers a differentiation of values into three categories:

- values that can be considered as aims of education (values-purposes: good, truth, beauty, initiative, honesty);
- values indispensable to education (means-values: kindness, helpfulness,

friendliness, empathy, sincerity, courage, etc.);

- values considered in education as evaluation criteria (criteria-values: goodwill, benevolence, fairness, independence, creativity, etc.).

Education from an axiological perspective involves the orientation of the educational process towards the most effective paths, the identification and capitalization of essential teaching situations, the finalisation of all investigations through the best choices, the establishment of a valid hierarchy of objectives and acting according to a relevant prioritisation (Bunescu, 1998). It has an essential role to play in the development of the individual, not only in providing knowledge and skills, but also in shaping character and moral values. The character and axiological function of education become fundamental in shaping the human personality and preparing individuals to become responsible and ethical citizens in society.

Even though values are essential in education, their approach to the educational process is sometimes neglected. While there is a strong emphasis on theoretical learning, there is a tendency to minimise the values in both curriculum and educational practice (Bae, 2009; Biesta, 2015). Students may find it difficult to resolve morally difficult situations and make moral judgements if they lack a solid basis in principles. Furthermore, concentrating just on theoretical knowledge may result in a shallow comprehension of reality that lacks the complexity and depth that arise from a grasp of values. The development of empathy, respect, and other critical social skills—all necessary for productive relationships with others—heavily depends on values.

However, preschool institutions function as a social platform where values are transmitted both consciously and unconsciously through everyday pedagogical practices (Emilson & Johansson, 2009). Research has shown that early education practitioners, mainly female, promote values such as caring and empathy in their educational work, encouraging children to look out for each other (Einarsdottir et al., 2015). The axiological system is culturally influenced, establishing a relationship of interdependence between the axiological and cultural functions of education. It can thus be seen as a system based on the influences of the child's first environment, the family. Experiences within the family have a cultural basis and determine each individual's perception of what positive or negative behaviour means. It is

essential to emphasise that adults with positive self-esteem easily accept children's behaviour. Children may acquire and practise virtues like collaboration, sharing, and empathy via their playful interactions with one another. Teachers can explicitly teach values and encourage positive behaviours through guided play activities. Also, adults may reinforce favourable actions with praise, encouragement, and prizes. Youngsters look up to adults as role models. They may affect children's beliefs and attitudes by modelling positive values in their own actions.

At birth, the child experiences a certain environment, which incorporates different aspects such as physical, geographical, technological, spiritual, economic, etc. The mindsets already formed in the family and the perceived values are strong guidelines that shape a real model for the child. The kindergarten intends to provide an ideal model but is confronted, in most cases, with the real pattern set in the family. This is where the distinction between socialisation and education becomes evident. Specifically, the teachers explain, encourage and guide the children towards certain norms and behaviours desired through education, but they notice that these value norms are often violated by their parents, who are part of their primary socialisation process, but also from other socializing areas. Thus, teachers transmit certain values, but through socialisation undesirable values are also adopted, even though socialisation can be defined in terms of internalisation of values.

According to P. Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction, individual actions are influenced by wider social structures, which are themselves sustained and transformed by individual and collective practices (Sullivan, 2002). Sociocultural influences are therefore heterogeneous, as children come from different families.

Contemporary society is characterised by an increasingly low tolerance for emotional discomfort. Sometimes, parents, teachers and students are engaged in a competition for performance. Almost everything is immediately accessible and this reality often generates superficiality, stress, impatience, aggression, etc. The accelerated rhythm of life is influenced by the fast evolution of technology and the expansion of social networks. Both have contributed significantly to changing the natural pace of development in time and space.

Virtual environments facilitate the instant delivery of content, which becomes problematic when children's brains become used to this fast rewarding pace. In real life, the learning process is much slower and offers fewer rewards, which can create difficulties for children (Ani-Rus et al., 2024). Children and parents have lost their patience in waiting for answers or viable solutions from certified specialists and they start to identify those on their own through the recommendations of "influencers". Their opinions, often undesirable, become appealing because of their large following and the mechanisms that favour popularity. Thus these insubstantial opinions gradually become desirable.

We consider that information that responds to educational needs, accessed by parents and children, is often uncensored, scientifically unvalidated and without a solid axiological basis. This lack of structure and validity leads to the volatility of information and the risk of consuming "unhealthy" teaching recommendations, with negative effects on the development of a child's personality. More and more parents want literacy and numeracy skills to be formed as early as possible, preparing their children for a competition that they are involuntarily engaged in, playing various roles imposed by adults, parents or teachers. In this context, parents frequently use tutorials available online, but not all of them are created by specialists in education with appropriate methodological skills, and the values they promote may be questionable.

In our opinion, the internet can provide a false shortcut to learning, which in reality is about attachment to values such as responsibility, scientific truth, honesty, fairness, etc. In today's society, dominated by a fast paced change and continuous technological evolution, there is an increasing tendency to promote pseudo-values (false values) and non-values (worthless). These days' generations spend less time with their friends in person since social media and texting have replaced other activities. This may be the reason why they are feeling unprecedented levels of anxiety, despair, and loneliness (Twenge, 2018). The values, customs, ideologies, and social mores that develop as a result of technology's incorporation and widespread impact in society are collectively referred to as technological culture. It includes how technology affects how people interact, behave, and perceive the world as well as how society adjusts to new technological developments (Oyinlade, 2024).



Superficiality, over-consumption and immediate reward are often promoted at the expense of true values such as empathy, responsibility and mutual respect. This tendency can undermine the formation of a balanced and axiologically oriented society by emphasising the superficial and short-term evolution rather than encouraging commitment to sound ethical and moral principles.

## 1.2. The position of values in the structure of personality

The term “personality” is frequently used in common language, referring to a set of characteristics, which are more or less evident in behavioural manifestations, defining how a person perceives the world and reacts in various life circumstances. In the wider sense, the term “personality” refers to the human being considered in their social existence and cultural enrichment (Albulescu, 2020). Personality includes the individual organism, the human psychic structures, the social relations in which one is involved and that influence one’s experiences. Therefore, personality is a bio-psycho-sociocultural system, which is formed in the conditions of existence and activity of the individual in society. One must be considered as a whole, a point of intersection of multiple relations and interrelations of a physical, natural, social and cultural nature.

From a psychological perspective, personality is centred on three interrelated components: temperament, aptitudes and character. Temperament is the dynamic-energetic side of personality and it is most evident in behaviour. Temperamental features are expressed in the behaviour of an individual from an early age and remain almost unchanged throughout life. Aptitudes are the operational-instrumental dimension of personality, supporting success in work. Their presence is highlighted by the speed and efficiency in accomplishing tasks and the high quality of results.

The character is the relational-value side of personality, being a distinct spiritual manifestation, a unique mode of existence and a set of psycho-individual features that shape a unique global psychological profile. It brings together characteristics or particularities relating to the subject’s relationships with the world and the values that guide them, thus becoming an authority in their

control, self-regulation and expression. A person's character is how an individual positions and relates to the events of their existence in the world. Thus, the character is formed by volitional features (volition) and stable attitudes (constant position towards something), through which the proper relation to the axiological system is realised.

Attitude refers to a combination of beliefs about an object or a situation, having two sides: an orientation side, which consists of motivational-affective and intellectual elements, and a volitional side, which consists of action elements.

According to these two sides, stable-oriented attitudes can be identified:

- towards oneself: autonomy (cognitive, emotional, behavioural, axiological), dignity, self-demanding or, on the contrary, humility, distrust; towards others: sincerity, kindness, altruism, demanding or lying, malice, selfishness, tolerance;
- towards one's profession: punctuality, correctness, interest, initiative or lack of punctuality, incorrectness, disinterest, indifference;
- towards society as a whole: patriotism, internationalism or hatred of the homeland, anti-Semitism, racism.

As can be seen, character cannot be defined without referring to moral values, which have a particularly important place in the structure of the human personality. Values are fundamental in the construction of the human personality, guiding individual attitudes, judgments and behaviours. A person's attitudes are connected with the value orientations (positive, negative or neutral) of their personality, having an important role in guiding and stimulating the individual's behaviour, being a general affective and cognitive vector within the value orientation of the personality.

The value system can be compared to an architect's design sketch, in which only those parts of the sketch that are immediately relevant to the future construction are taken into account, while the rest can be temporarily ignored. Different subsets of this sketch are activated according to different social situations. Values are based on feelings, and feeling, thinking and willing are the conditions in which value is manifested.

Values, defined as abstract ideas about what society considers good, right and desirable, are essential aspects of cultural identity (Goodman, 2003). Values are dependent on human nature and spiritual culture (Gardner, 2007). M. Rokeach (2008) defines value as an enduring belief, as a social and personal purpose or path of existence.

Some authors believe that there are at least three different meanings of the concept - of value, which are related to motivation, social and organisational processes and ideology (Doron & Parot, 2001).

According to C. Kluckhohn (1951) value is a conception, explicit or implicit, specific to an individual or a group, of what is desirable, influencing the means and purposes appropriate to an action. The value orientation is an organised and generalised understanding, which affects behaviour about nature, one's place in it, interpersonal relations, but also what is desirable and undesirable in the context of the environment and human relations.

Values cannot exist independently, each value determines and is determined by other values. The relationships between values are consistently organised, guiding all the actions of individuals, as a result of stable and long-lasting patterns through which individuals structure their beliefs about their goals in life and desirable ways of achieving them. Values never exist in isolation but are embedded within value systems. In these systems, the value set is relatively stable, but it can change by modifying value hierarchies and priorities.

Professor S. Cristea (2000) expands the definition of a value in a specific pedagogical one, being integrated into the components of education, respectively in its general dimensions: moral education (moral good), intellectual education (scientific truth), technological education (the usefulness of scientific truth), aesthetic education (the beauty of art, nature, social life), physical education (mental and physical health).

To relate to a constantly changing world requires, first of all, to relate to a system of moral, ethical, psycho-physical and social values, which have always been the constant milestones of the educational process, as well as the positive appreciation of the person within the process. The idea that

values transcend human awareness and are constantly being reconstructed by each individual, reveals without a doubt that the task of the school is to develop humanity in every person. That is achieved by equipping the child with multiple educational values, allowing them not only to be integrated into school and society but also to adapt to a changing world.

Education involves the modelling of a person who is capable of being integrated into society. At every stage of the educational process, activities are directed and guided by the goals pursued. These objectives reflect educational policy guidelines intended to develop the human personality following certain values.

## **2. Implementation of values education in early childhood. Examples of good practice**

Education for values can be realised in kindergarten in different ways, mostly depending on the creativity and involvement of the teacher.

In the organised environment of a kindergarten, the child should be encouraged to adapt his behaviour to different situations, to become aware of the positive and negative consequences of his/her actions on himself/herself and others, to show confidence, honesty and courage in his/her relations with himself/herself and with others, to adopt a tolerant attitude towards peers in difficulty (Brănişteanu & Florescu, 2024).

In October 2022, the Romanian Ministry of Education initiated the National Educational Program of Education for Values, Play, Respect and Joy, intended for all teachers in early childhood education, to form the sociomoral behaviours that are the foundation of values education for children aged 2-6 years. The program proposed a list of 36 values to be addressed in the educational work with children. The list could be supplemented with other values suggested by teachers, parents or collaborators of the educational institution. Among the values mentioned in the program, we mention: acceptance, truth, help, goodness, kindness, honesty, fairness, trust, perseverance, freedom, friendship, etc.

The above program is a starting point in guiding early education towards the promotion of values, but for the internalisation of values by children all activities should be axiologically oriented and all actors involved in their education (parents, family, teachers) should follow the same value system.

Early childhood education will only be anchored in values such as professionalism, collaboration, fairness, empathy, well-being, etc., when it is built on a foundation called play. Both the teacher and the child need to perceive the world of play as a multidimensional framework whose philosophy encompasses varied hypostases that migrate between different states, whether metaphorical, paradoxical, systematic, epistemic or unpredictable (Catalano & Răileanu, 2019).

The foundation of the child's personality development is the behaviours learned through play. Play is a social activity not only because it involves several children, but also because the social reality often provides the theme and content of the game. Many games are characterised by social interaction between participants and also have a sociomoral component, as children are put in a position where they have to behave according to established rules and depending on their partners. The game becomes an organised way of forming and developing sociomoral behaviour.

Since the preschool age is favourable for developing moral and character features, we propose in the following section some suggestions for each category of learning activities in kindergarten, through which topics in the sphere of sociomoral values can be addressed. The following categories of learning activities can be found in kindergarten:

ALA - Freely Chosen Activities

ADP - Personal Development Activities

ADE - Experiential Domain Activities

## 2.1. Value addressed: Responsibility

**Learning activity category:** Freely Chosen Activities (ALA)

**Activity title:** Small but Responsible!

**Aim of the activity:** Formation and development of responsible behaviour in children

**Materials used:** audio stories, light board, crayons, pencils, paper, model words, coloured pencils, watercolours, flipchart paper, flipchart sheets, markers, lego, wooden building blocks

**Organising and carrying out the activity:**

The activities by centres of interest take place after the children are familiarised with the theme of responsibility. The following centres are open:

**Library:** Responsibility in Stories (children listen to short stories about what being responsible means, then with the help of writing tools and an illuminated table they model the words they encounter in the stories: responsible, listen, care, parents, etc.);

**Art:** Map of Responsibilities (the children have flipchart paper on which they draw/paint together a map symbolising the responsibilities they have at kindergarten or home);

**Construction:** Children's Town of Responsibility (using large pieces of wood and Lego, the children build a town in which each inhabitant is responsible for certain things or actions; at the end, the children tell the story of each inhabitant of the town they have built);

**Role-play:** Family Dinner (children choose their desired role and imitate the behaviour of family members, emphasising the responsibilities of each one).

**Age level/Group: II, 5-6 years/large**

**Observations:** The above activities are for guidance only and can be modified and adapted according to the age and developmental level of the children or according to the values that the teacher wishes to explore with the children. Other centres of interest can be prepared according to the children's preferences (Science, Sand and Water). All the categories of learning activities (ALA, ADP and ADE) must be connected to obtain an unified and compact scenario.

2.2. Value addressed: Kindness

**Learning activity category:** Personal Development Activities (ADP) - Morning Meeting

**Activity title:** City of Kindness

**Aim of the activity:** to develop children's ability to identify the main features of a value - kindness

**Materials used:** flipchart sheets, crayons, the story *City of Kindness*  
Organising and carrying out the activity:

Children are seated in a semi-circle on chairs or on floor pillows. The specific steps of the Morning Meeting (greeting, attendance, nature calendar, news of the day) are carried out, then, during the group activity, which in this case corresponds to the Story Time, the teacher tells the children the story *The City of Kindness* (created story):

“It was a beautiful winter day. The white snowflakes were dancing in the sky, drifting down to the ground and wrapping it in a soft blanket of snow. Two little brothers, Pavel and Mircea, were living with their father in a small, tiny house. They watched the snowflakes dance outside, their noses pressed against the cold window. It was cold in the little house, their father had not returned from the forest yet, with the wood for the fire, and their thick coats were still missing this winter. Their mother had gone to Heaven, leaving the two little brothers in their father’s care. The father struggled with his two children, living a life full of hardship and poverty, and the people around them were uncaring and offered them no help. One day, in front of their house, a wooden sleigh with shiny, curved soles stopped in front of the two little brothers’ house, and a tall man with a white beard and grey hair stepped out. It was Christmas. He saw the two children standing at the window, came to the door and said: ‘I am Christmas, I travel the world in my sleigh. Earlier I stopped to rest, but a cunning fox, seeing that I was asleep, stole all my food. Now I am very hungry and have nothing to eat. Do you have a loaf of bread for me?’ The two little brothers, when they heard about Christmas, did not hesitate, they searched the cupboard and found 2 potatoes and a half loaf of bread. They boiled the potatoes, took out the bread and invited Christmas to the table. When evening came on, the boys’ father returned home, bringing the wood for the fire, and he was surprised to see a stranger sitting at their table. Christmas got up from the table and with tear-filled eyes said to his father: ‘You have raised two kind-hearted children who have given their last piece of bread to a stranger. I want you to come with me to my town where you will never need anything. My city is called the City of Goodness, and I travel the world to find as many good-hearted people as I can so that my city grows bigger. Father and his two children accepted Christmas’s invitation and moved to the City of Goodness, where people are good to each other, help one another, work together and live a peaceful life. Since then, Christmas seeks and rewards kindness, turning every corner of the world into a City of Kindness.’”

After finishing reading the story, there are discussions on the topic, the children and the teacher extract the message and identify the characteristics of goodness.

**Age Level/Group: II, 5-6 years/large**

**Observations:** The above story can be the starting point for an one-day integrated activity, with the possibility to organise the tasks in a STEAM.

**Science** - *Ice Globes* (experiment: liquid/solid water)

**Technology** - *What did Christmas bring to the children's home?* Based on the same story (*City of Kindness*), the children identify the vehicle that brought Christmas to the children's cottage and then make it out of wooden cubes.

**Engineering** - *City of Kindness* (children sketch the city using measuring instruments)

**Art** - *The City of Kindness as I see it* (painting using different techniques, in which the children paint the image of the city in the story)

**Mathematics** - *Courier in the City of Kindness* (reinforcing the numbers 1-9 and geometric shapes; children will distribute the parcels, following the city map and road signs)

The children can also continue the story by proposing different activities to complete the logical flow.

2.3. Value addressed: Respect

**Learning activity category:** Experiential Domain Activities (ADE), DOS - Human and Society Domain, DLC- Language and Communication Domain;

**Activity title:** Precious Words

**Aim of the activity:** to form and develop the children's ability to use polite expressions in different social situations

**Materials used:** video projector, laptop, pieces of paper, story A Role Model For Others <https://youtu.be/XjH68nzd85E?si=qK4pw97uWRe23N6D> (digital resource)

**Organising and carrying out the activity:**

The children are seated in a semicircle and watch the story A Role Model For Others. The story is about the importance of using polite manners and being respectful to others. After completing the story, the children sort pictures related to the characters in the story according to the observed behaviour, differentiating between inappropriate and appropriate responses. Next, with the help of the teacher, the children identify the polite phrases used in the story and exemplify their use in various everyday situations. At the end of



the activity, the children glue pieces of paper on which they use polite phrases: thank you, please, hello, sorry, etc.

**Age level/Group: Age level/Group: II, 5-6 years/older**

**Observations:** the above activity can also be done classically, without the introduction of technology, using storyboards/pictures or other techniques such as story carpet, story apron, story flour, etc.

#### 2.4. Value addressed: Empathy

**Learning activity category:** Experiential Domain Activities (ADE), DOS-Human and Society Domain)

**Activity title:** The Mole And His Friends Learn About Empathy

**Aim of the activity:** to develop children's ability to identify behaviours associated with empathy

**Materials used:** the story of "Little Mole and the Big Pants" by Zdenek Miler, illustrated by Eduard Petiska, Arthur Retro [https://youtu.be/\\_VW8vuPu\\_c?si=T-Yio09L9wL\\_3MWC](https://youtu.be/_VW8vuPu_c?si=T-Yio09L9wL_3MWC) (digital resource), The Star Of Questions

**Organising and carrying out the activity:**

Children will be seated on pillows in a semicircle and will listen to the story of *Little Mole and the Big Pants*, read by the teacher. The children, organised in 5 groups, will compete in the elaboration of questions and answers based on the keywords: WHAT; WHO; WHERE; WHY; WHEN.. A picture of the main character, Little Mole, is placed on the star in the middle. The children will be encouraged to formulate questions and answers that highlight empathy-related behaviours. After this moment, the children will verbalise similar situations in their lives where they have shown empathy or a friend has been empathetic towards a personal situation. The activity will end with a drawing activity of an imaginary character illustrating empathy through the eyes of the children. The works will be displayed and discussed in a corner of the classroom.

**Age level/Group: Age level/Group: II, 5-6 years/older**

**Observations:** the activity can be done starting backwards from the drawings made by the children, creating their own stories with the characters designed to highlight situations related to empathy.

### 3. Conclusions

Value education is not just a science that can be taught, it is a way of life that requires constant behaviour, supported by concrete actions. Teachers in early childhood education have a particularly important role to play in promoting values in young children since they can have an influence on them and involve them in axiological activities, but the influence of parents and family in shaping their children's behaviour and sociomoral skills should not be minimised. The family facilitates children's discovery of values from the very beginning of their lives, defining the axiological profile of the future adults from an early age.

The first step in value education is for teachers to develop a clear perception of their attitudes and behaviours governed by axiological principles. Positive values and the exploration of their meaning need to be placed in the centre of the teaching process for the education itself to be valued.

Value education is an educational practice that inspires and develops positive qualities in kindergarten, along with critical thinking, imagination, self-awareness, intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. The values promoted within the kindergarten can be approached from two perspectives: methodical/didactic and scientific. From a didactic point of view, the presence or absence of axiological education is influenced by teachers' attitudes and the organisational culture.



The ways of carrying out value education in early childhood are multiple and can be established at formal, non-formal and informal levels. In the kindergarten, values can be integrated into all categories of learning activities included in the preschool curriculum (free-choice games and activities, activities on experiential domains, activities for personal development) as well as into all educational projects and programs, extracurricular and optional activities.

Forming and modelling values in children takes time, patience and consistency and is one of the most important investments in children's development. It is never too early to start familiarising them with values, thus helping them to become more responsible, develop self-esteem and lead a balanced life.

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