

PEDAGOGICAL REALIZATION OF THE HUMOUR AS A METHOD AND INSTRUMENT FOR TEACHING IN YOUNG CHILDREN'S AGE

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Abstract

The usage of humour from young children's' age as a method and instrument of education helps the children to understand with easiness the meaning of definite thoughts and feelings coming from its entertaining-amusing element and characteristic mixed with wisdom and imagination from the one side and from the other side – the teachers to be able to use it for analyzing of worldly situations and acts of people, animals in the fairytales and literature' heroes, to make a moral and comprehend the conclusion.

The humour has a healthy meaning in the children's development and its application in the pedagogical practice of the children's teacher transforms in art helping the child from young age to comprehend its meaning. That is why, in the preparation of the students in the universities – the future teachers is necessary for them to take into account the usage of humour in the teaching process with the growing up as a method for differentiating the comic and ugly sides in life from its entertaining-amusing measurement; to learn them to laugh understanding the sense of humour; the child's smile to follow the emotion and experience. When the children in the kindergarten "breathe clean air" followed by shining eyes of joy and amusing, smart humour then every day is a happy one and there is no stress in it. The children can differentiate with easiness the absurd situations from the normal worldly ones in the positive side and light.

The humour encourages the development and imagination of the educated and the teacher should understand the difference between the reality and what is in the humoristic story.

The formation of knowledge and skills for a correct adopting of the humour in the process of education from a young children age is a fundament for an achievement of a creative thinking and artistic development of the grownups. The different forms of humour make easier the adopting of the world's laws, human habits and way of life because the laughter is not just a pleasure from the funny part but as well a release of the tension and an emotional relaxation.

Keywords: entertaining-amusing character, emotion, experience, creative thinking, emotional relaxation

1. INTRODUCTION – THE HUMOUR THROUGH HISTORY

Since 80s of XX century exists an International Society of Humor Studies, engaged with applied and theoretical researches in the subjects for humour and laughter. Although the efforts of this small team of researchers for some decades this area is still not so respected in the scientific environments. In the Handbook of social psychology, Gilbert, 1998 the word "humour" was mentioned only once¹. On the other hand the humour is shown from Peterson and Seligman (Peterson Seligman, 2004) as one of the 24th most important characteristics of the temper of the person. Nevertheless, the area of the humour is still more neglected as a fruitful environment for scientific researches.

According to Dr. Amy Carrel, (Carrel, A. 2000) most of the scientific researchers in this area come from

¹ From: Psychology Today <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-humor-code/201109/the-importance-humor-research>. For a comparison in the same book again for once are used the terms "clicka", "puertoricans" and Index of Garin.

another disciplines and this is why the area called “humourology” is still in its embryo.

According to Psychology today (2012): “The humour is taken as an unserious subject. The scientific researchers care always their work to be respected *and the researches for the humour are considered to be not enough prestigious. People think that there are many other really important issues which we have to try to solve*”.

The humour usually is a positive phenomenon. As a phenomenon, the humour often assists the physical and psychological wellbeing. For instance – with humour it is easier to survive in comparison with stress and psychological burden. It is even helping to people to overcome the sorrow about a close person².

The social actions of the humour are known as well. People who make easier jokes seem to have more friends and the sense of humor seems could influence the choice of a partner, workplace, and friends. There are even systems for teaching based on humour and the benefit of it in studying (Stambor, Z.). And last but not least, the humour could be used for solving of uncomfortable situations, or releasing the tension.

According to M. Lovorn (Lovorn M., 2008), the researches show that the humour helps the studying and when it is used correctly it can strengthen all kinds of brain connections. He advises the teachers and parents to use more humour in the teaching of children, using jokes, histories, rhymes games and etc. to make the studying nicer. Lovorn even puts more influence on the humour stating “With the help of this natural method for communication and interaction, the parents and teachers could strengthen the creativity and skills for critical thinking, to strengthen the values, to show a good moral behavior and citizen responsibility, to create trust and to give to the children a way for dealing with the sadness, disappointment and sorrow” (Lovorn M., 2008).

2. THE HUMOUR AS A SOCIAL ACTIVITY AND PHYSIOLOGY

As a social activity the humour is studied by a number of theoretical researchers, including and Raskin, Apt, Freud Greyg, Viktorof, Bergson and Fry. The linguist Raskin writes that „the range and level of the mutual understanding of the humour varies in a direct dependence on the level in which the participants share their social origin”(Carrell A., 2000). The anthropologist Apt explains „joking relations”, which he called „based on a model behavior similar to a game between two individuals who share a special friendship or another type of a social relationship between them” (Carrell A., 2000).

Sigmund Freud describes six aspects that contribute for and attribute the happening of the humour (from the so called „comedian” and audience):

- a) The best condition for having a comedian satisfaction is the happy mood in which one is inclined to laugh.
- b) A similar positive effect one can have by the expectations of the comedian; to be in a mood for comedy.
- c) Adverse conditions for the comedian appear from the kind of the mental activity done by a concrete person at the moment.
- d) The possibility of having a comedian joy disappear in case when the attention is put exactly to the comparison which arises a humoristic effect.
- e) The comedian could be strongly affected by the situation especially if there is not only a comedian effect but it gives a boost of a strong affect/insult.
- f) The generating of a comic effect could be encouraged by any other supporting circumstances.

John Greyg wrote, “*nothing itself is not funny: the funny thing takes its special qualities by a person or a group who laugh at it*” (Carrell A., 2000). According to him the joking person should know well its audience to make them laugh. His theory is that one text or anecdote is not initially funny until a given audience found it as such. In the same way Viktorof claimed that „a man never laughs alone – *the laughter always belongs to some social group*”. According to him, to laugh one should belong to a given social group and with this he underlines that the humour is a social phenomenon. But it is not clear why Viktorof excludes the possibility a man to laugh alone without the existence of a social group.

² The importance of humor research, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-humor-code/201109/the-importance-humor-research>, 2012

Robert Provine (2012), claimed that the humour is „an universal human language known to the nations of different cultures” .

According to him, „*taking into account the universality of the laughter, our negligence about the aim and meaning of laughter is notable. We somehow laugh in the right moments without knowing consciously why we are doing this*”(2012). He concluded that the laughter is above all a “social vocalization” which gathers people.” A hidden language that all speak. *This is not a learned group reaction but an instinctive behavior programmed in the genes. The laughter connects us by humour game*” (2012). It is important to be noted that Provine also considers the issue how much the humour and laughter could be considered as one and the same thing.

Robert Provine, in his article “The science of laughter” in the chapter “Nothing to joke about” described its study on the sociality and reasons behind laughing. In his words „*the study of the laughter brought me up of the laboratory into the much more exciting world of the paradise gas, the religious animations, and the lessons in acting, the tickling, chimpanzees’ babies and the demand for the most ancient joke*”.

An interesting conclusion by Provine is that people cannot laugh by wish. In Wikipedia though it is marked one of the varieties of Yoga – laughter yoga in which the basic aspect is the so called *self-triggered laughter*. Rebecca Fast (2011) claimed that the body does not recognize the natural laughing from this by wish. Like her and Provine though pointed out the big role of the social environment for stimulating the laughter.

The laughter begins for most of babes at around fourth month’s age (Lovorn, M, 2010), and develops quite fast in the next year. The initial ability of the baby to laugh as well as the ability to recognize the satisfaction is also followed by scientific researches (Freud, 1905). Even if that reaction to the satisfaction is not scientifically defined as a “humour” it is decisive. In many medical and psychological environments the laughter of a baby is welcomed as one of some indicators for the normal psychological and social development (Warren, 2001).

The humour in this sense can ease the studying (Freud, 1905). Children whose interest is caught like that prepare themselves for a more effective studying. From academic point of view the results from the scientific researches show clearly that there is important positive relation between the suitable for the age and situation humour and the academic result. The humour itself is a definite type of a cognitive event. As Paul McGee claimed, “*to understand the humour it seems two different activities of the brain are included: we should first define the character of the non-corresponding event and then to analyze and understand it*” (1979).

An interesting monitoring of Nelson is that until you learn to laugh at the wrong things or humiliating the cognitive abilities of the child could slow down their development. The humour that make ashamed, mock or humiliate somebody not only form bad interpersonal skills but also is a contra-productive in regards to the social and academic development (Nelson, 1989).

According to him, at the age of seven, the sense of humour of a child starts to be alike to that one of an adult. As a result of the development in the language development the children in that age begin clearly to understand that some words have double meanings and that when they are used in a proper time and situation can be really funny on the basis of the clear suddenness.(Makgii, 1979). At that moment of development the differences in the senses of humour of the boys and girls become notable.

Although the difficulty the humour essence, there are some main theories according to which this phenomenon can be viewed. The most popular of them with the strongest theoretical and research support are:

- A. Theory of the discrepancy (cognitive, sensual) – in English „Incongruity theory”
- B. Theory of the superiority (and humiliation, and the social aspect) – from English „Disparagement”
- C. Theory of the release (of tension) – English”Release/relief theories”

There are other theories less popular which can be put difficult to some of the basic categories³.

3. THE ROLE OF THE HUMOUR IN THE TEACHING SITUATIONS

³ За допълнителни източници може да се разгледа „Historical views of humor” на Amy Carrel Ph.D., 2000, University of Central Oklahoma. Retrieved on 2007-07-06

In different ways the results of the other researches support the hypothesis that the humour is an index of a psychological health. A research made by M. Abel (2003) searches the connection between the humour and strategies for overcoming the stress and load. The results show that people who have more sense of humour *“feel less stress than those with less sense of humour although they had similar problems in life”*. People who have more sense of humour were more inclined to use positive views and search to solve problems than the rest. According to them their results underline *“the role of the humour in pre-structuring of the situation in a way to be less stressful and problem-solving oriented strategies for overcoming of the load”*.

Different researches were looking for the relation between the humour and cognitive views. Kuipar (1993) shows that the better sense of humour leads to better positive cognitive assessments of the situations. Two years later a new research of Kuipar and colleagues shows that *„a higher sense of humour helps the individual to cope with in a more positive and matured way with a different set of daily circumstances and situations”* (1995, 370). Except these positive effects the researchers found out that the humour can increase the possibility of conscious efforts directed to alternatives for the problems, the emotional distance from the stress and in this way – the decrease of negative experiences.

Renner marked in his research for the relations between the humour and the different capabilities and styles for self representation that the humour is bound with different qualities which supports the evolutionary theory. According to him for the good humour are necessary another qualities as well – for example presentational capabilities (Renner, Heidi – 2010, 187). According to Craig и Ware (1998, quoted by Renner) the presentational skills are one of the three most important components for receiving of a good joke together with the understanding and estimation of the humour. It is examined as well the so called non-verbal humour, i.e. the role of the retelling and presenting of the joke itself as a difference with the clear verbal humour described in the theory of scenario of Raskin.

Renner mentioned that *„when people interact it is more than possible the strength, competence, mastery and cooperation, intimacy, unity and the self-confidence to play a decisive role.”*

The use of humour in a young children age as a method and instrument of teaching helps children with an easiness to understand the meaning of definite thoughts and feeling coming from its entertaining-amusing element and character mixed with wisdom and imagination from one side and from the other side – teachers use it for analyzing of the daily situations and acts of people, animals in the fairytales and literature heroes, to have a lesson learned and think of the conclusion.

The humour has a healthy meaning in the children development and its application in the pedagogical practice of the children’s teacher makes it an art helping the child from early age to understand its meaning. That is why in the preparation when in the universities of the students – future teachers it is necessary to be put attention of the using of the humour in the educational process of the growing up as a method of differentiating of the funny and ugly in life from the entertaining-amusing measure; to teach them to laugh understanding the meaning of the humour; the child smile to go parallel with the emotion and the experiences. When the children in the kindergarten *“breathe clean air”* accompanied by sparkling from joy eyes and amusing, smart humour each day is a happy one and there is no stress in it. The children with easiness differentiate the absurd from normal daily situations from their positive side and light.

The humour encourages the development and imagination of the taught and the teacher should understand the difference between the reality and what is in the humoristic story.

Hypothesis: The so presented research was realized on the basis of two initial hypotheses.

A. A high level of positive humour (self affirmative and cohesive) correlated positively with a high level of success

B. A high level of positive humour correlated positively with a high level of successful strategies of pedagogues for cope with the stress

A questionnaire *„Humor styles questionnaire”*⁴, (HSQ) is created by Dr. Rod Martin (2003), who measures four relatively independent ways in which people use the humour. The questionnaire (Martin, R. A., Puhlik-Doris, P., Larsen, G., Gray, J., & Weir, K., 2003), consists of 32 statements which the respondents rank according to the level in which the statement is true in their opinion.

The subjects are separated into four factors. In this way the scales for the four styles of humour were

⁴ Ang.- Humor styles questionnaire (HSQ)

specified, described by Martin (Martin, R. A., Puhlik-Doris, P., Larsen, G., Gray, J., & Weir, K., 2003):

- „Affiliative humor” – a cohesive style of humour. A humour used for getting closer with the rest and distracting the tension.
- „Self-enchanting humor” - a self affirmative style. Usually is a mechanism of coping with the stress. It is related to the accepting of the things from their funny part and with one common humoristic view on the difficulties and problem situations.
- „Aggressive humor” – an aggressive style. A humour used for maintaining dominancy or to ventilate a frustration in a given situation. Typical examples are sarcasm, mocking, humiliation.
- „Self-defeating humor” - Self-defeating humor. A humour used for lowering the personal dignity and encouraging jokes “for the price of” the speaker. A known does of this style usually is a good sign and individuals who reflect strongly this tendency can be especially successful in the society (for example “the clown of the class”). Although this, often behind this emotional needs are hidden, insecurity, avoidance.

Description of the sample

In the study there are 65 responders who participate and fill in the questionnaire online or a paper questionnaire. Of them 53 (82%) are women and 12 (18%) are men. The sample consist mainly of pedagogues aged between 25 and 30 (22%). 45% of the responders are aged from 31 to 40 years old, and over 40 years old are 33%.

Totally 52 (80%) of all questioned have a higher education and the bachelor and masters are equal– 40%. 20% have an educational level of professional bachelor and teachers’ amateurs (not pedagogues). The levels on the scale „Cohesive style of humour” are the highest with the young pedagogues and the lowest are with the adults, senior teachers. These data show that the junior teachers are mostly inclined to use the humour for distracting of the social and professional tension. (Table 1).

Table 1. Dispersal analyses of the scales for statistically important differences

<i>A questionnaire for the styles of humour “cohesive style of humour”</i>	<i>Working pedagogues</i>	<i>Number of questioned</i>	<i>Average value</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>Standard mistake</i>
	25-30 years old	14	20,30	3,10	1,02
	31-40	29	19,80	3,32	1,50
	over 40.	22	15,90	3,12	1,75
	Total number	65	18,67	3, 22	0,55

The forming of knowledge and skills for the right perception of the humour in the teaching process in young children age is a fundament for achieving of a creative thinking and artistic development of the growing up. The different forms of humour ensure easiness in the acquiring of the world laws, human habits because the laughter is not just a satisfaction from the funny part but a release of the tension and emotional relaxation.

According to a study, the five years old children laugh more than 200 times per day and the adults – 20 (W. Wicki, 2000). This is owed to the fact that the surrounding environment is a new one and incredible for the child in its young age and this unique human talent is in its apogee namely when it is lacking the reality of life – 43%. In the same time the development of the sense of humour and the acceptance of the things from their funny part are an important element of the educational act in the kindergarten and family - 33%. Its scientific importance is explained with the role of the sense of humour as an instrument for the development of knowledge as an indicator for the forming of some cognitive functions– 24%.

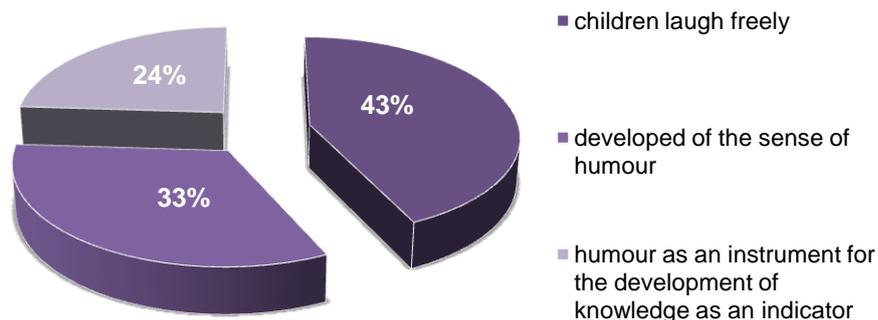


Fig.1.

The joy is a phenomenon of the nature and small children laugh in the beginning not because they have a built up sense of humor but because the emotion of joy is in their nature, an emotional answer to the social interaction – with different smiles for the different situations.

From the young children age the children laugh a lot at jokes that for the adults are nonsense and not important at all. At the age of 6-7 they start to discover the humour understanding the double meaning of the words in the communication with them and the others. All this they make from the experiencing of a joy feeling from the communication and the game.

Especially good for the development of the sense of humour is to think of and retell to the rest in the group in a funny way which has different results – according to the level of culture, interests etc.

4. IMPORTANCE OF THE HUMOR FOR THE INTELLIGENT, EMOTIONAL AND HEALTH DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILDREN

Intellectual benefits

The child develops its sense of humour together with the language which in its essence is an intellectual game of the brain. This is the reason the jokes and anecdotes to appear after we learn to read. At the time of the pre-school stage of the development of many children need of explanation why one thing is funny and other is not.

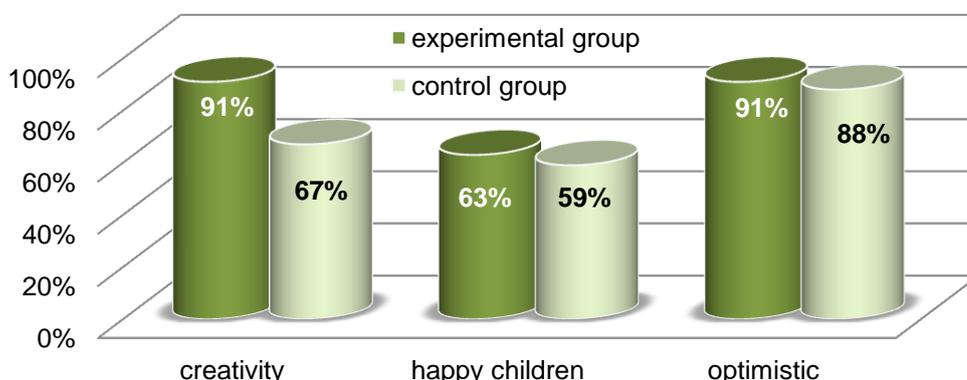


Fig.2.

Our study shows the relation between the sense of humour in children and their creativity which is distributed 91% in the experimental group (EG), applying the humour as a method and instrument for teaching according to 67% in the control group (CG) where they work in the traditional method. в контролната група

/КГ/, където се работи по традиционния начин (Fig.2.). This helps for the forming of a capability of understanding that there is more than one meaning of the words and expressions in the communication between people, which assist them later when they solve problems.

Social benefits

The children realize that the telling of funny stories and anecdotes is a wonderful way of attracting of attention. At the same time they refine valuable communicational skills. Their first attempts are funny because they still do not understand the double meaning of the words but this only underlines the relation in the triad: humour – level of language – social experience.

The sense of humour is an important factor for the social status of children – those who could retell in an interesting way and amusing jokes and anecdotes in the children society are better socialized because the laughter is a wonderful instrument for the game and friendship. On their turn they continue to keep their emotional stability and strengthen the child self-confidence, the children “jokes’ deserve more respect and tolerance than they receive!

- *Emotional benefits*

The humour as a method and instrument for teaching develops positive feelings and make the children happier and more optimistic, they have a higher self-confidence and an aspiration to cope with the differences – their own and foreign: 63% in CG, 91% in EG. They are more liked by their peers and more capable to cope with the adversity of the daily life: 59% in CG, 88% in EG.(Fig.2)

- *Health benefits*

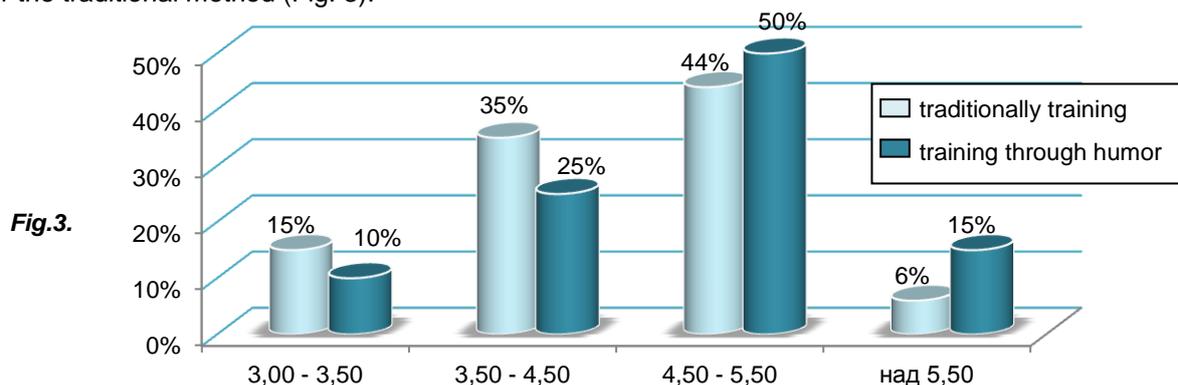
The World health organization published many times data which proved the contribution of laughter for the health of people. The humour helps when one has heart problems, problems with the breathing, high blood pressure, depression, viruses, tumors, it improves the immune system. As the basic problems nowadays are related to the stress, laughter is one of the best solutions for a good health of the growing up generation. This could be guaranteed in the purposefully use of the humour as a method and instrument for teaching from an early age. As early as the children begin to develop this capability the better they would be able to cope with the stress of life.

The humour is a dynamic and proactive corrective of the child negativism

The use of humour from a young child age helps for the non-problematic acceptance of the negative assessment put by the teacher as a dynamic and proactive corrective for a wrong answer or behavior, an act of the child. This requires the pedagogue to have a very strongly developed sensitivity to the experiences of the students, a creativity and negligible presenting of the teacher’s point of view through the look of the child and his idea of humour to be transformed as an initial resource for development of positivism in the grown up.

In the teacher’s work with organized occupations and situations in the games and labour activity realized in the kindergarten and school can be accomplished activities with the help of different forms of humour teaching.

The children in experiment group (EG) where the humour is applied as a method and instrument of studying with a higher average result of education are used to the problem situations easier getting the amusing and entertaining element. The students from the control group (CG) have a lower average result when they work under the traditional method (Fig. 3).



In EG step by step there is a development of a sense to the use of humour and its interpretation and understanding not as thoughts and feelings but as a right sense of the entertaining – amusing context of the language. An emotional relaxation is achieved expressed in excitement of feelings, smiles and a wish for continuing communication in the children society.

The combination of humour and different forms of art, theatre and musical elements direct unintentionally the learners to the positive sense of the realities in life around them and the disadvantages of the man in its deeds helps for the easier order of the puzzle with values – goodness, sympathy, compassion, mutual help, love to the others around us.

The analyzing of the differences in the songs with humoristic element dispose 91% of the children in the EG to rhythmic and unconditional dancing movements, a need of sharing of the musical feeling in a way of dance, choro, a need of using of improvised instrument – drum, castaneti, sticks. In the CG only 57% of the children have such a disposition which transforms quickly from a state of laughter and joy to anger and a light aggression.

Of course the right of creating a humoristic atmosphere in the work with children is a priority not only to the foreign language education and arts. The good pedagogue can skillfully use as a method and instrument in its practice in any regime moment of the day – during teaching, games, in the nature, in amusing activities of the children – a table tennis, theater of shadows, dramatics of a folklore fairytale, a children show with masks o heroes. All this gives a favorable environment in which unconditionally the humour could be implemented as a method of interpretation of the negative and absurd from its positive side in life of a man, to help the children in their right conclusions. The advanced analyzing of the differences in the songs and poems with humour leads the children to the building of an auto reflex for its using in discussing and comparison of the human behavior in the face of the heroes and the place of every act in life of the children in the group.

A good idea is the use of caricatures, drawings, animations and presentations with a humoristic element which is in favor of a positive psycho climate in the work of grown up.

The humour as a method and instrument for studying in a young age gives a possibility for cultivation of nobility, for a casual recognition of the good and evil in life, for happy experiences and a creative thinking in children. It helps the teaching of self-critics with a sense of a joke and entertainment with the negative of the reality. The children as social creatures do not love people to be punished and judged. Their naïve optimism is a nice one and this is a secure guarantee that with the use of the humour as a method and instrument for work with them, the teacher will form optimists with skills for building of a defending mechanism from the criticism and insult. In this way the children will be able to accept easier “the different” from them people in life – people with inabilities (physically and psychologically), children with special educational needs who have a mock that they do not deserve because of these deficits.

The study and our observations in the pedagogical practice prove that the use of the humour as a method and instrument for teaching in the educational activity will contribute already in an early children age a positive thinking to be developed and the children will have more chances for their survival in different daily situations. The grown-ups will have a correct positioned feeling for a justice without an inclination of destroying the dignity of the other people in their environment.

We could give the following recommendations for the improvement of the pedagogical practice as well as the overcoming of the stress from the pedagogues:

- The children humour is developed in the family which is a mirror image of the children development – what the humour of the parents is, such one is acquired by their children as well;
- The parents and teachers should help the children from an early age to understand the double meaning of the words, to retell them jokes and anecdotes, having a patience with them;
- To watch comedies together with the children but before that to be confident that the humour is appropriate for their age;
- Make a sense of humour when realizing the daily and labour tasks;
- Not every conflict should be resolved through a serious discussion. Sometimes the humour is the best exit. If you find the right tone, the humor can be incredibly effective method for passing through the hard situations;
- Let's not forget that the children are direct and they often could not realize the joke but they always are happy to laugh together with their teachers and parents;

Let's remember always that the older children hate sarcasm which is directed towards them but they adore

the wit.

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