

## FAMILY FREE TIME IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES DEVELOPMENT – SELECTED ASPECTS

Małgorzata PRZYBYSZ-ZAREMBA<sup>1\*</sup> - Maciej KOŁODZIEJSKI<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Family Pedagogy, Department of Family Studies, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Pedagogy, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Karkonosze College in Jelenia Góra

\*Corresponding author E-mail address: malgorzata.p\_z@interia.pl

### Abstract

Free time is a constitutive value of every person providing not only some relaxation, freedom but also education and integration. The optimal use of family free time can lead to child's multiple intelligences development and their progress in the intellectual, moral, social and physical areas. The intensification of the actions activating the child's development in family results in child's increase of predispositions and undoubtedly causes that they adapt more successfully in various areas of the adult life.

**Key words:** Free time. Family. Multiple intelligences. Child development

*“Free time is the greatest challenge and responsibility a person must face.”*  
William Russell

### 1 Some explanations on the issue of free time – in form of the introduction

Free time is a constitutive value of every person providing not only some relaxation, freedom but also education and integration. Initially, the concept of explanation of free time was undertaken by the American economist T. Vebleu underlying that it is 'the entirety of a person's life apart from work, the amount of time a person manages.' [1] Over the years the concept has evaluated and presently it is difficult to provide its accurate definition which would refer to all of the age groups of a human being. An attempt at explaining this term was made at UNESCO academic conference during which the definition of free time suggested by Joffre Dumazedier was accepted. According to this author, free time is that time which an individual can use for their own and non-imposed activities, thus being the activities taken on their own. It is the available time which is left for an individual after completion of any other duties of professional, school-related or family-related character [2]. Such time should be devoted to develop one's own interests, entertainment, relaxation and any form of social and educational activity, which provides an individual with a lot of pleasure and satisfaction.

In the pedagogical literature a lot of definitions of free time can be found which is variously interpreted by researchers. Some (Zbigniew Kwieciński among others) identify free time with the budget of time which is treated as 'internal proportion of various ways of using time at certain period of human life' [3]. According to this definition, free time is treated as a component of the budget of time which is understood both as a psychological variable and common statistics related to economy of time. Jan Pięta has a similar standpoint indicating that it is the very time which is free from duties and dedicated to activities at will [4]. Giving this claim a more profound deliberation, it can be noticed that on one hand, time is an objective dimension as we all possess the same number of hours and on the other hand, it has a subjective dimension since it is experienced and valued in various ways [5]. Others (Ryszard Winiarski among others) place the reference of free time to recreation which is defined as activities undertaken beyond school, professional and family-related duties and which are used for relaxation or entertainment. Recreation is characterised with voluntary, selflessness and pleasure [6].

The researchers highlight the differences in defining free time of children and youth as well as adults. Thus, children's (youth's) free time is (should be) formed under the influence family, school or other upbringing-educational institutions interaction with which an individual deals. Therefore, the children's ways and the forms of spending free time depend on the approach of these institutions towards the individual, their creativity, motivation and most importantly their very interest in the child/ children. Aleksander Kamiński [7] indicates (among others) home-centred and outdoors, solitary and non-solitary as well as passive and active. These types underline among other the place of spending free time (at home and outdoors), participation of people 'managing' the free time and its form (passive, active.) Analysing these factors, one can notice the participation of adults (parents, teachers) in creating the ways of spending the free time by children and youth.

Free time spent in 'home-centred' way can have two dimensions: active – the whole family jointly undertakes the activities for the sake of children's development, activeness, and creativity (i.e. educational games, board games, nursery rhymes, puzzles and many others) and passive – each of family members spending time together (close to one another) makes their free time attractive on their own. The existing stereotype presents that a mother usually spends her free time in the kitchen cooking, cleaning and doing other chores, whereas a father spends his free time in front of television or reading the daily papers. Their children organise their free time on their own without parents' participation nor control. The contemporary forms of children's and youth's spending their free time based on home-centred basis are of passive character, because they are frequently limited to the use of media

– mainly the Internet or television. The research conducted by Krzysztof Ostaszewski [8] and his team-mates indicates that children's and youth's 'escape into the virtual world' and various unconventional (risky) behaviours undertaken there are on the grounds of the family's disordered functioning. Lack of parents' interest in their children's free time provides them with the upper hand with undertaking such activity which is seldom beneficial to their development and operations. The research presented by Jacek Pyżalski [9] points out the disorders (depression, high level of anxiety and fear) which can be formed by children and youth as the result of the improper way of spending free time. Children, educationally neglected by their parents, quickly undertake the search in the virtual world, they prefer the 'mediated' communication, they search for support in the online environment and the new friends among the people from this environment. However, the outdoor forms of children's and youth's spending free time are usually of active character. Free time is organised by institutions, like school, youth clubs, educational centres, community day care centres, culture centres and others. The irreplaceable role in this field is held by school which 'directs' the child's interests and also plays an impact on their selection of extra-curricular activities. At present, each school offers a huge variety of extra-curricular activities taking place at school. They vary from the classes developing and cultivating children's and youth's interests to some classes supporting or helping some pupils. The latter ones include the classes realised as the psychological-pedagogical support. They are directed at pupils with so-called special educational needs (i.e. pupils with developmental deficits and disorders, with specific difficulties at learning, pupils with some chronic diseases, with disabilities and the exceptionally talented students.) What must be underlined is the fact that children's and youth's participation in the offered by the institutions forms of spending free time requires the parental consent (often in written form.)

Adults' free time differs significantly from children's free time. It is said that we spend the least time on relaxation and entertainment. The basic difference in spending free time by children is its duration – it is longer than with adults since children spend less time at school than adults at work and also children have fewer household chores. Additionally, the use of free time is also different. Adults can organise their free time by themselves, whereas children seldom use it properly enough. Adults bear the full responsibility for the way they spend their free time, however, in case of children (youth) such responsibility is out of question. It is the parents that are to bear the full responsibility how their child spends their free time.

The basic purpose of the undertaken considerations is the free time within a family, and most importantly the parents' participation in organising children's (youths') free time, discovering, developing and caring for child's interests, abilities and talents. As research indicates, extremely important are these actions and situations created by the child's closest environment (family environment) which favours their development. Therefore, basing on the review of literature and the present state of research, the authors wish to present it.

## **2 Family free time as category favouring child's multiple-intelligences development**

It is a parents' duty to create the developmental situations to their child so that they can fully apply their multiple intelligences creatively. However, one must consider that this possibility results not only from the variety of personal abilities, inborn and environmental conditioning but also, or perhaps (in some cases) from the attitude of parents – transgressive or conservative. Thus, free time can be perceived as this category which favours child's development, their intellectual, motor, aesthetic abilities and similar. By arranging child's (first infant's and then baby's) free time with something similar to 'developmental activities' which actually are a form of playing, we must remember to interact with child's all senses, especially taste, touch, smell, hearing and in the first period (of life) the sight in the least way. Moreover, the senses allow the child to recognise their closest ones and to contact with the surrounding. An infant has the excellent senses of hearing and touch which initially are the only and the main ways of learning the world. The sense of smell is relatively well-developed, sight is poor and the least developed sense is taste. Game plays bring children pleasure and is beneficial for their development. Among the game plays we generally have to distinguish: imitative, dynamic, manual game plays, rocking-horse play, game plays in water and sand forming the sense of rhythm, sports game plays (with a ball), visual arts game plays (drawing and painting) and hide-and-peek. Another important activity of fundamental influence on child's development is communication with the child, especially the conversation. It is particularly important in the initial three years of life for the development of intelligence, cognitive processes (especially focusing the attention), the development of emotional intelligence (including empathy.) It is extremely important to praise and encourage the child to take up various activities (intellectual and manipulative) [10]. Generally, playing with the child is the most important activity during which the child develops mental (intellectual), social and physical abilities. Both academics and parents wonder how to diagnose and evaluate human abilities (intelligence) more extensively, more practically and more fairly. Despite many excellent developmental theories (mainly the theories by Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Jerome Bruner, Albert Bandura or Erik Erikson), the theory of multiple intelligences by Howard Gardner searches for relations between the intelligence of adults and the educational environment of a child in which the game plays prevail – as the most natural part of child's life leading to developmental changes [11]. The Theory of Multiple Intelligences by Howard Gardner provides the academics and the practitioners with the new perspective on the issue of a person's intelligence re-defining the fundamental questions related to its nature from 'if' you are intelligent to 'how' you are intelligent. The significance of Howard Gardner's discovery is the fact that

the science (mathematics and physics) and language learning are not the only ways of demonstrating person's intelligence. People can display their intelligence in many various, often unpredictable ways. Simultaneously, each type of intelligence is equally precious as the remaining ones. Gardner classifies these intelligences in eight following various categories: bodily-kinesthetic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical-rhythmical, visual-spatial, naturalistic. Parents' actions (and then tutors and teachers) are to improve their children's various intelligences, enhancing such constructive features of talents as imagination, creativity, cooperation, social skills, consideration of one's own linguistic abilities, critical thinking and the attitudes towards nature [12]. The period of infancy was always mystical but at the same time promising to the further development of a child. Early infancy is characterised with three-sided approach where the key figures in child's multiple-intelligences development are: the child itself, the parent and subsequently the tutor (teachers.) All of the parents' actions should aim at the upbringing of multiple-intelligences character, meeting the child's fundamental needs (mainly love, care) and simultaneously providing the enriched multi-sensed environment aiming at meeting the higher needs related to each child's cognitive, psycho-social and bio-social abilities. The care for an individual's emotional development is also vital. Therefore, Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences needs to be combined with the theory of emotionalism by Daniel Goleman, the research by Marion Diamond and Jane Healy on the brain and the enriched environments [13]. Especially the emotional intelligence is more and more recognised as a vital prophecy of success in family, kindergarten, school and professional life. All the family free time activities should include its formation, since it is related to the ability of recognising one's own personal as well as others' emotions and feelings and also later the ability to apply the information to solve problems, conflicts and to improve the interaction with others. The strategies of teaching emotionalism should refer to various styles of learning and should include visual, sensor, audio and inter-active elements such as playing others' roles, group discussions and situation simulations (i.e. present during the game play with the child) [14]. A substantial significance is associated with the figure of father in child's upbringing. The research by N. Torres, M. Verissimo, L. Monteiro R. Oliviali, A. Santos suggests that father's involvement in the recreational activities outdoors is the direct factor contributing the development of social competences and also the reason of smaller problems with being open to communication, especially with boys [15].

Other, also contemporary research on the development of the brain have a profound implications in the area of children's development and education and the ways in which the brain develops to form children's intelligence. There appear the following questions: (1) What are the functions of the brain in the context of multi-intelligence development? (2) What are the critical or sensitive periods of brain development? (3) How can parents (and subsequently teachers) benefit from 'windows of science'? (4) How much of the person's intellectual ability is formed under the influence of environment and how much under inheritance? (5) Which semi-sphere of the brain is responsible and what for and whether this knowledge is not a myth? (6) How does the brain influence the learning of language(s)? (7) How can parents get involved in their child's education? [16]. It is also worth learning the academic theories related to informal and formal education of a child discussing the approaches of the following theoreticians: F. Froebel, M. Montessori and J. M. Hunt, and also the research on brain by some other authors, including the works by T. Wiesel, D. Hubel and B. Epstein [compare 17]. Summing up, it can be concluded that the interactions with children on every day basis in so called free time constitute the stimuli to learning through experiencing. Interacting with adults and other children, children at the same time enter the interaction with the environment and the play-time is a constant and unchangeable part of this learning whose effects will be displayed throughout the child's adult life. These actions stimulate the physical, social, emotional and intellectual spheres in the atmosphere of mental balance relieved from the stressful learning. The stimulating environment of learning increases the chance to the brain development. The early developmental experiences in form of a play-game can result in the increase of about 25% synapses in brain. Children do require a proper stimulating environment but the experts place some warning that parents should not put the pressure on their children when it comes to focusing on interests [18]. Personal development depends on both person's natural abilities but also the upbringing environment. Everyday natural activities (feeding, stimulating senses and the quality of care) have a direct influence on child's well-being and simultaneously each event in child's life is of educational character. Never will a child learn so much as during the first year of life. The most important is developing the senses of hearing, seeing, touching, experimenting, smelling [18] and the kinaesthetic experiencing of the world [19]. Plato himself seemed to be conscious of the existence of many intellectual aspects of human mind and was against coercion in child's education. The assumption that a child learns most effectively through game-play is dominant even in the contemporary times [20]. Various preferences for play-game should be discovered by parents and properly cultivated and simultaneously parents should be alert as for the change of these children's preferences and look for the most effective forms of cooperation with a child. Undoubtedly, children differ from one another with their preferences in terms of strategy of learning the world. Child's development and the manner of interpretation of their life experiences influences the quality of education [21]. Children's education must focus on the real stimulation of senses, active participation and treating the child as the whole – mind, body and soul, which is related to all of eight multiple intelligences. Stimulating and the application of the active participation favours the development of multiple intelligences and the brain. The theory of multiple intelligences proves the existence of

sound reasons for which the multi-intelligence and multi-sensed education in family in early childhood helps to increase children's intellectual, physical, moral and aesthetic capacities in the future [22]. Understanding the fact that the creative approach facilitates the processes of learning and helps with child's development, one must search the effective ways of developing child's creative expression by encouraging them to present themselves through visual arts, music, drama, dance, creative motion and dialogue. The strategies of developing child's spontaneity based on the theory of multiple intelligences will be beneficial at recognising each child's strong points and at planning the creative actions allowing children to participate in them in accordance with their abilities, capacities and interests [23].

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