

Case study

# Structural development of child's artistic expression

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## Abstract

Structural development implies control and capability of the expression usage in terms of independent creative expression and making. Understanding of structural development of child's artistic expression as a phenomenon (which is suitable to child's age) has some implications on methodical acts considering artistic education of children and youngsters. Therefore, it is of unexceptional importance to know these laws as well as methodical acts which encourage the structural development of artistic capabilities from an early age. Various experts dealt with this phenomenon, particularly Bogomil Karlavariš. In his methodical research he has given an unexceptional part to this problem. It has been a starting point for analysis of certain methodical questions which are included in this work.

**Keywords:** *structural-artistic development, artistic types, child's artistic creativity, teaching methods of artistic education and upbringing*

## Introduction

Psychological and pedagogical importance of children's activity (exceptionally artistic ones) and their artistic expression is fundamental for the creation of various tendencies and educational styles in teaching. Many psychologists, pedagogues, aestheticians, artists and teachers dealt with the research of children's artistic capabilities. Psychologists analysed the problem of defining artistic capabilities in terms of art and aesthetics, while Art teachers and pedagogues confided in experience gained throughout practice (Filipović, 2011).

In the research of artistic expression related to the youngest children, its function, forms, laws and above all its meaning, D. Belamarić gained all of the importance of analyzing and interpreting concerning this field. Child's development includes artistic and common capabilities (perception, forming and creation). Without this knowledge, development of the child would not be complete and with no positive results. Language of Art or child's artistic expression is innate faculty of expressing, communicating and forming. Therefore, Belamarić states that this faculty is not taken over or thought by surroundings. According to her, artistic expression forms itself as a result of a spontaneous interaction of the child's inner self and its surroundings. She also states that kids tend to express content of their consciousness throughout characteristics and meaning of shapes (which are not attainable by grownups). Different forms of artistic expression are indicators of

the processes inside child's mind. They also strengthen child's abilities of perception and understanding. Child's artistic creative capacity can develop or even weaken depending on whether the child was given an opportunity or artistic expression (Belamarić, 1987).

The uniqueness of structural development in Arts, starting in childhood, can help the process of defining and optimizing the methodical acts and models encourage artistic creativity of kids and youngsters. Children communicate in their own authentic way. Depending on the way the child uses certain expressive elements in its art works, the approach to artistic activities will be defined. By following that approach and its laws (which are authentic, unique, different, in relation to general characteristics and inherent to child's individual ability) artistic creativity will find itself on the right track.

### **Aesthetic foundations of structuro-artistic development**

Karlavaris has done numerous researches in this field which helped defining the child's basic development characteristics in Arts. The phases of development are often defined in different ways. Nevertheless, it is important that most of the researchers agree about one fact. It is the rhythm of child's artistic ability. This research is based, more or less, on those phases defined by Karlavaris (Karlavaris, 1975). Considering that children of the same age draw in similar way he states that the reasons are anthropological. Some reasons refer to specific segments of children's motoric and their consciousness. Karlavaris said: "Child's artistic expression is made of various components which gradually develop and which can be divided into internal and external" (Karlavaris, 1975). In this case Karlavaris implies internal components to be the ones which refer to degree of inner sensibility and rhythm, level of consciousness and to the possibility of the complete awareness of all expressive components. It also refers to a degree of motoric development and concentration of energy. Those two elements must be in reciprocal coherence. External components are referred to usage of expressive resources (media). Impacts from the outside world can be verbal, optical or acoustic. Internal and external components develop in all its complexity. Therefore, artistic expression changes itself in its qualitative and quantitative manner according to those two components.

Karlavaris singles out these artistic elements: line, shape (looks), colour, shade, texture and primary relations between them (size, proportion, symmetry, repetition, alternation, internal rhythm, direction, dynamics, statics, balance, unity, dominance, space volume, composing). Optical and thematic plan develop gradually from the ages 2 to 7. Between the ages 4 and 5, creative plan develops abruptly, while structural plan stagnates. Artistic expression of the preschool child relies on line, shape and color. Characteristics and specifics of knowing the art elements in the field of drawing and painting between ages 5 and 7, Karlavaris described in his book "Art education" (Karlavaris, Kelbli & Stanojević-Kastori, 1982). He defined the laws of child's artistic forming as a result of numerous researches done by him. Milošević speaks about relations of the Art elements. He also singles out aesthetic principles as primary relations. Those are: harmony, composition, rhythm and balance (Milošević, 2008).

In their book "The Form Theory" (2004) Bogdanović & Burić say that every visual image has certain form (shape) which is made of series of artistic elements. Their aim is defining of a certain form. According to Bogdanović & Burić, it is necessary in the first place to define artistic conceptions throughout principles of artistic forming. In that way we can understand artistic elements and their usage concerning child's artistic expression. "Regardless of whether the art piece belongs to an artist or to a child, it contains

the same elements. Every art piece must be evaluated only on the basis of objectively noted and critically observed relations. To accomplish this all artistic elements must perform entirely and simultaneously together" (Bogdanović & Burić, 2004: 8). They name aesthetic grounds as principles and acts. With their help mutual relations of the structural object are coordinated. Those relations are: harmony, contrast, balance, dominant and unity. The idea of harmony can be understood as a harmony of similarity (to bring into accord elements using their shapes), harmony of function (difference of shapes in their form with common function), harmony of symbol (to bring into accord shapes which are different in its form and function, but have common spiritual and abstract meaning). Contrast represents the difference of opposite (black must be opposed to white in order to understand their value). Contrasts are necessary in order to emphasize what is meant to be stressed. Balance represents the visual equalization and the easiest way of achieving balance is symmetry which gives an impression of calmness, distinction and dignity. Dominant represents central shape. The task of the dominant is to picture basic artistic idea. It is pictured throughout size, shape, planned artistic procedure, colour and emphasizing the form. Unity represents coordination of all artistic elements. Unity and connection between all these elements form an esthetic law of artistic shaping. It is important to bring into accord stylistic and artistic unity with appropriate thematic idea. Once they are synchronized, the harmony of contents and for is achieved (Bogdanović & Burić, 2004).

### **Specifics of structural-artistic development**

Karlavaris did a numerous researches for The Center of Child's and Youth's Artistic Education during the 1970's in Novi Sad. One of those researches was supervising of the artistic development of the same students and the trend of intellectual and emotional maturity in Arts concerning children between the ages 3 to 16 (1974). The aim of research was to define the developing phases in child's artistic expression. It was impossible to differentiate those factors which depend on inner laws of a person's development and on laws of external effects. He tried to determine the facts: 1. Relevant factors which influence artistic development; 2. Individual and typological differences within child's artistic development. Karlavaris used specific measuring tools for the purposes of this research. Standpoints for supervising the intellectual level in Art were:

1. Security in observation used to picture single objects (shape, silhouette, other characteristics and a number of details) and used to picture the object relations (size and space relations, the way of object's logistic connecting);
2. Persuasiveness in usage of adequate artistic elements while picturing objects (adequate usage of shape, line, colour and texture);
3. Security of the motive's technical realization (calmness of the hand, security of the usage of technical resources);

If we consider the supervising of the creative-emotional level as a key element, following characteristics will be determined:

1. Creative level (originality, fluency, redefinition, flexibility, sensitivity to problems and elaboration);
2. Level of the artistic abilities which are stimulative (sensitivity of observation, sensitivity, creative thinking, emotional experience of motives and sensitivity of the mothoric nerve);

Every of these criteria had its own scale (0-10). In the end they were reduced to two grades (for intellectual artistic matureness and for creative-emotional maturity).

The results of the research showed that artistic development indicates a tendency of rise until the age 6-7 and then it is followed with an abrupt fall which matches the moment of child's start of elementary school education. Karlavaris explains this as a result of certain disturbances in person's development continuity which are a product of that period's education and upbringing.

By comparing the trend of intellectual-artistic maturity with the trend of creative-emotional matureness, Karlavaris noticed continuative decline of creative-emotional component and continuative strengthening of intellectual-artistic component. These trends are bad according to him. This is because the laws of stimulating artistic development are already known and because these two components are constantly changing as a condition for notification of creativity. Departure of these two components and the constant decline of creative-emotional component lead to skill, routine, repetition of learned (uncreative processes). Karlavaris explained this phenomenon with an intellectual orientation of the educational system which expanded in that period and with the obvious decline of art classes in schools. One of the causes was also disharmony between institutions and primary schools. Therefore he stated that only continuity of contents and methods in artistic expression (in all schools) can lead to continuity in artistic ability development.

Taking into consideration that artistic language is similar to every other language, Karlavaris thinks that it can be learned spontaneously and consciously. Artistic language is gradually acquired. Just like verbal language artistic one cannot be learned instantly. It develops slowly. Child's structural development can be observed by the level of mastering artistic elements and by supervising their mutual relations. Karlavaris has systematically defined and described this fact.

According to Karlavaris, **line** and **shape** are used as first artistic elements by preschool children. The line appears first. In time it forms into shape. Circular shape is the easiest to a preschool child. It begins using it early. The children can notice the circular shape within their toys. Some of them are ball and bicycle. Later they notice it on various things that surround them in everyday life. In that case circular shape is not drawn separately. It is a part of a more complex composition. Small practices that are involved in assigned games can be very helpful to children. Throughout them children learn about other geometrical forms and how to implement them into larger composition. Portrait as a form of expression appears at the age 6-7. Through portrait child expresses its emotions according to model. There is no realistic similarity with a model. Children use line to underline the details, colors certain parts of drawn shapes to emphasize what is important to them. They can successfully combine different kinds of line: straight, curved, circular, long, short, thick and thin.

Speaking of **line** and **texture**, the child first becomes aware of the line's length and continuity. Afterward it becomes aware of line's ability to confine and of creating shapes. B. Karklavaris states that older children have an ability to consciously use lines of different thickness, textures and shades in order to enrich the drawing area or shape. This is possible only when appropriate pedagogical methods are used throughout the process of teaching. In this age, child often uses line decoratively.

In accordance with the laws of development and sense to comprehend space, **line** and **space** are manifested among the preschool children as a chaotic space, syncretic linking of objects. They are also manifested by usage of simple and double frizzes, by

breaking the frizz and by placing the objects in front or behind one another without reducing its size. When child begins to separate its objects from the frizz line, it tries to place them into space by putting some of them in front, and some of them behind the others. The child is still not able to visually picture space and follow the laws of perspective. Children achieve the spontaneous way of picturing space on the grounds of directed observing of the surrounding.

**Basic and created colours** can be learned by the preschool child. It can learn how to create different shades of colour and how to use them consciously. In the beginning, a child uses colour in a line form, draws using colors and finally fills the space with certain color. Child gradually experiences colours and uses them in its artistic expression. Children first use only one colour. They are not interested in colour as a pigment. They use colour as a drawing tool. Therefore, it uses a brush and paint to draw lines and to create object contours. Gradually it notices that colours can be used to make smudges, to cover a large part of drawing area. Child plays with colours placing smudges side by side. First it uses basic colours. Later it learns about possibilities of mixing and producing new colours through game and conversation.

**Local colour** is not used by child at first. Children develop a sense for local shade of colour gradually. Usage of organized pedagogical methods showed that older children acquire this spontaneously. Children use colour decoratively in order to illustrate their imagination. Child uses the favorite colour to emphasize things which are of certain importance to it.

**Colour and texture** children experience mainly by using the sense of touch. Different textures of the material are used in order to teach them about this. However, children under the age of 8 do not use texture consciously. They spontaneously learn about it through experimenting with colours. In that way child experience texture through dens layers of colour or through painting with fingers. This kind of work is interesting to children. They play, research and discover throughout the process.

**Composition of colours** is combined spontaneously by children of this age. It is combined according to current mood or topic. Children do not know the laws of combining the colours. Child usually composes live and contrast complementary colours such as red-green, yellow-purple. In that way it produces strong colouristic contrasts. Children can develop a sense for harmonious combining of colours if appropriate pedagogical methods are used.

**Shade-brightness** can be used as a mean of expression only by obeying developing characteristics of artistic expression. That rule implies also to the preschool children. Children of this age cannot solve complex compositional problems of larger shading contrast. Child expresses itself by nature by using intensive colours. It does not mix colours. Mixing of colours comes as a result of inappropriate handling of artistic material. Children should get already prepared colours. They should be offered with all kinds of colours and with different brightness. By doing so, children are able to use colours according to their senses. They should mix colours with white and to paint directly out of pallet. Children of this age must recognize and name colours of different brightness. They ought to use colours by filling the painting area with them.

**Bright-dark** relations can be achieved by using collage or watercolors although these methods should not be insisted on. Gradation of light is still a problem to a child. Therefore, it solves this problem superficially without shading.

**Brightness of colour** can be learned gradually by children. The child should be supported during the improvement process which includes coloristic expression. However,

there should be no insisting on the way children use space and form in sculpturing. Colours of full intensity catch the attention of children. Therefore, they often use tube colours. Complementary relations are often unconscious and spontaneous.

**Line, shade, brightness** are very familiar to children in the ways of linear expression. They should be cherished, especially those applied on motives which encourage child's artistic imagination. However, shading of the drawing is not common among preschool children.

**Balance of halftones** is a relatively huge problem concerning preschool children. They are insufficiently familiarized with fluid painting materials. Fear of certain technique often represents an obstacle to a child's expression. Simple drawing is a first step of mastering the Chinese ink technique.

**Volume** is likely to be represented by usage of shade. Therefore, preschool child cannot define volume consciously.

**Brightness** and **graphics** can be learned among preschool children by experiencing the graphics. For example, it can be achieved through cardboard print and monotype. However, children must be mature in artistic fashion. The development of the sense for graphic expression is a complex process. It begins with simple fingerprints and handprint. Already prepared models are then used for printing. Motives can be simple and decorative – dress patterns or wallpapers. Cardboard print can be manufactured by using papers of different texture and relief. Lace can be used as a decorative supplement. Monotype requires a work with smooth plate or linoleum. Since children work fast with colours, it is possible to print matrix while it is still moist. Technical aspect is very important, but mustn't be the only one that requires attention. Creativity is of the greatest importance. Knowing the technique of print is sufficient for a preschool child to solve some artistic problems.

**The shaping of the material** is very applicable for a large number of games that stimulate creativity. It can also be used in the adaptation of various topics. Children develop sense for relation between masses, usable value of materials, construction and technical skillfulness. Game must be a starting point in the process of creating. Within its boundaries certain artistic problems can be researched. It also allows gaining a certain technical experience.

Considering that the artistic expression of the child is mainly spontaneous, preschool children solve problems depending on their sensibility and idea. However, encouraging them to find specific **compositional solutions** is possible. Children's spontaneity, interests, experiences must be taken into consideration during the adaptation of such complex artistic problems. Therefore, children are given tasks which hold within itself certain artistic problems. These problems are solved spontaneously through work by children. If the task is organized in a fashion that requires more consciousness among children, than it is possible to discuss about usage of composition in artistic terms (choice of composition which is suitable for certain ideas and artistic messages).

**Rhythm** is familiar to children because of rhythmical functioning of life's physiological processes. The child jumps, speaks and draws according to rhythm. Artistic task can be in certain connection with other activities such as speaking (rhythmical pronunciation of words or verses, singing). Children of this age cannot conduct stylization of the shape in the right way nor precisely compose an ornament in the constant rhythm.

**Symmetry** cannot be learned among children of this age only by using theory of symmetry. Children spontaneously solve symmetrical problems.

**Balance** is a quality of an artistic organization and of other activities. Sensitivity for evaluation of relations and respecting the laws of nature must be developed carefully.

After successful development of these skills children are able to spontaneously organize their art works and achieve balance in terms of artistic expression. Children of this age easily accept symmetrical solution. Nevertheless, they can perform the decorative tasks which include problems of rhythm, formal and informal balance. Solution of these tasks should represent spontaneous expression without any imposed models. Motives should be suitable to a child's age. Motives should be linked to child's direct expression (patterns on mother's dress, patterns on a playing ball).

**Repetition** is familiar with children of a preschool age. They are able to organize artistic unity by obeying the principles of repetition which are already included in task. That way child can learn effortlessly. It can discover artistic relations throughout the work.

**Gradation** is not completely developed among children of preschool age. The play with shapes and brightness can influence the improvement of the child's inventiveness and creativity (the crucial significance of artistic activity concerning children of this age).

**Harmony** appears spontaneously because the preschool children reduce and connect similar colors, shapes and other values. They are not able to obey basic principles of harmony which include the right choice of similar qualities.

**Contrast** mainly appears through intensive color of complementary relations. That is how the impression of contrast is achieved during the process of combining shapes and colors. Suitable tasks which include this artistic problem can help the building of composition by following the rules of contrast.

**Composing direction** includes few variants: diagonal, vertical and central composition. Children are not familiar with these laws. Therefore, they come to these solutions spontaneously while building artistic composition.

**Stylization** can be learned throughout the tasks which require the stylization of the shape. However, it cannot be achieved completely at this age because children tend to simplify and schematize almost every shape (Filipović & Kamenov, 2009; according to Karlavaris, 1974).

## Conclusion

Artistic development is conditioned by various influences (family, surrounding, cultural tradition, child's psychological structure). Therefore, it is possible to determine methodical practices and approaches which deal with the development of child's individual potentials from its early age. Line, shape and color are the first artistic elements that child deals with. Shade and texture develop more slowly. The elements of volume and space are the most complicated ones. Composition is usually used spontaneously. Children come to compositional solutions naturally. According to Karlavaris's analysis, it can easily be noticed that not all artistic elements and relations are acquired equally among children. They develop in their own rhythm. However, child's individual artistic development can be followed and adequate methods can be used during this development. It is possible if artistic language is used and mastered in some degree.

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