

TEACHING UNIT 1 TEACHING FRAMEWORK

PLAYTIME. IDEAS TO MAKE PLAYTIME INCLUSIVE

FOR ME AND MY SCHOOLMATES

ESO Category, BACCALAUREATE AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

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1. INTRODUCTIONS

Approaching the playground as a learning environment, as a resource for creating more inclusive societies, as an opportunity for inclusion, is a reality that is becoming increasingly common in schools and a goal to develop in all schools, despite the fact that students in these stages of education rarely play there.

These days, playgrounds are conceived from two complementary viewpoints which are bound to converge, the playground as a physical space and the playground as a social space.

The first is concerned with architecture, with material resources in leisure areas and games; while the second focuses on personal relationships, on the presence and participation of all students—always bearing in mind that we are speaking of and remembering all needs and disabilities that pupils may have—on getting along and the respect that underpins all human relationships. These informal learnings must be included and incorporated both in everyday life and in educational projects at schools, since they ensure inclusive, fair, quality education for all pupils, helping to create more inclusive societies and eliminating exclusion from education with education. Pupils in these stages can also contribute to the development of sustainable citizenship by acting as volunteers to create links with the community, develop skills, learn, becoming agents for change, protecting nature and, above all, improving the quality of life of all people.

When we talk about inclusive education we mean participation in both formal and informal contexts. It means a humane concept of education that advocates for values like social justice, human rights and sustainability. When we talk about inclusive education mean a new vision of education that makes it possible to transform lives through education, taking into account the non-curricular aspects that encourage development of emotional wellbeing, personal relationships, personal development, physical well-being, autonomy, self-control and social inclusion. When we talk about inclusive education in the playground we are talking about opportunities to develop all these aspects, always focusing on the

people and improving their quality of life by participating in the leisure activities that take place there, or by promoting volunteerism, as mentioned above.

Facilities at schools where the second cycle of infant education, primary education and secondary education are taught are governed by regulations, and require there to be a “playground, partly covered, which can be used for playing sports, of a size suitable for the number of school places, which must never be smaller than 900 square metres, which is used at different times by students in different stages of education¹”, each autonomous region is responsible for determining the length of children's playtimes. This means that facilities for compulsory education are regulated, but that there are no regulations governing the other stages covered by this teaching unit, such as Baccalaureate and vocational training and that there are schools that only teach post-compulsory education that are not equipped with these facilities. In these cases, the challenge facing pupils with this unit, is fundamentally the integral development of the person through proposals for Social Learning, offering a component of commitment to the development of skills, competences and knowledge.

Some autonomous regions have guidelines regarding the methodologies to use at playtime in Infant Education, but they do not apply to other stages, although playtime should be looked upon as a time for informal learning, learning to be and to live together, according to Delors. Perhaps youngsters do not play so much at these ages, but the socialising function of education is clearly reflected in these two pillars and, in Secondary Education, Vocational Education and Baccalaureate, it must be fully developed which is achievable by using proposals and dynamics that **emerge from the social and physical space of the playground.**

Learning to be, to develop a personality, to learn to be autonomous, to self-regulate, to adopt certain automatic behaviours, to be able to learn in non-formal, leisure contexts, where the necessary competencies can be acquired to live in this complex society, full of uncertainty, such as today's society. UNESCO (2012) refers to these as transferable, soft competencies, which are non-cognitive and are related to non-curricular aspects, with aspects like communication, leadership, entrepreneurship. These competencies are related to social skills, increasing the capacity to empathise, to find solutions, to establish links and collaborate.

In the globalised, ever-changing society where we and our students live, it is important to take a holistic approach to education and knowing how to adapt to different contexts and moments is a need. Learning to live together goes beyond human relationships and interactions and extends these relationships to the environment, so that sustainability is important for strengthening the principles and ethical values that must be developed at these ages.

¹ Royal Decree 132/2010 of 12 February establishes the minimum requirements applicable to schools that teach second cycle infant education, primary education and secondary education.

2. USING PLAYTIME FOR TEACHING PURPOSES

Children's playgrounds are important physical spaces at schools, despite the fact that teens and young people no longer play very frequently. How is it possible to make use of the benefits offered by this space when at these ages they no longer make regular use of it? How can we work with dynamics in a non-existent space? How is it possible to convince these students, who think of the playground as a place for little children and something that has nothing to do with them anymore? Therefore, the idea is for them to intervene on these spaces with their own proposals, which they carry out themselves, whose purpose is to enliven or transform the playground, allowing them to coordinate and manage these proposals that promote socially committed activities or which, simply, allow them to enjoy a welcoming, safe place for rest, leisure or living together.

In any case, the use of this space at these ages should be different, changing it from an open, unwelcoming space to one that advocates for a new concept of citizenship, with responsible citizens with solidarity, based on environmental and sustainable literacy, which leaves nobody out, a space to value and celebrate diversity, so that all the proposals made to transform this space focus on achieving this.



2.1. PLAYTIME AS PHYSICAL SPACE

Playgrounds are used as sports grounds where all the activities take place. Generally, the largest space is used to play ball games, almost always football, leaving little room for other types of games or activities. Physical equipment like table tennis tables, fountains, benches and green spaces is rarely provided, so before starting to transform the space, it is interesting to reflect on architectural aspects that impact the behaviours of boys and girls in the recreation space.

The use given to the playground as a physical space is dominated by specific pupils—always bearing in mind that we are speaking of and remembering all needs and disabilities that pupils may have—to the exclusion of others. Gender, disability, cultural diversity..., are segregated during playtime, making this a time for other pupils to walk about alone, individually, or to play in a corner, there is therefore a

necessary, pressing need to rethink how it is used. Playtime can become a daily moment of bullying, exclusion, loneliness and conflict for teens and young people.

Playgrounds can be equipped with different spaces and corners that cater for the pupils own interests, concerns and motivations. Spaces or corners designed by them and for them where they can develop shared activities in safe spaces.

Accessibility goes hand in hand with inclusivity, which is a quality that must be catered for in all environments so that they can be understood and used by all. Accessibility fosters equal opportunities for everyone and means beyond eliminating barriers, since creating accessible environments and spaces that all pupils can enjoy and use, requires a proactive approach against segregation and exclusion by and for education, during moments of leisure and enjoyment.

Accessibility must be one of the objectives to consider for the transformation of the playground taking into account aspects related to physical and cognitive accessibility in schools and the playground in particular, creating and designing truly accessible environments for all students.

But this is not the only aspect to be taken into account when designing and restructuring playgrounds, since **education for sustainable development** promotes initiatives of empowerment, skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that improve the lives and future in a sustainable manner. This strengthens environmental education that commits individuals to build a fairer world, but also to develop a critical, responsible and committed society.

Proposals to develop sustainable playgrounds will include education for sustainable development and should include green areas, school gardens, water fountains, recycled games for use the outside and benches for resting, chatting and relaxing.

2.2. PLAYTIME AS SOCIAL INCLUSION

Playtime as a social space emphasises achieving and obtaining collaborative and cooperative values that promote social interaction. Inclusive education advocates for education for all and is based on a holistic approach to education that encompasses cognitive, ethical and emotional aspects. The playground is the perfect space to contribute to further these aspects with specific proposals that can be developed through play.

At secondary schools, playtime is a place for young people to pursue social relationships in the groups to which they belong. At these ages, social relationships are extremely important to evolutive development and young people start behaving more like adults. It is common to find groups of students using the playground as a place to sit on the ground and talk or lean against a wall, talking about things they are interested in. They are 'closed' groups that rarely interact with others, making these segregated spaces that exclude certain groups.

The objective here is for older students at schools to guide collaborative and cooperative games for younger children, thus encouraging them all to meet and interact.

Sustainability, peace, co-existence, mutual respect, dialogue, social justice, care, respect and tolerance are **values** that can be worked on through play. The playground taken as a place for social interaction is conducive to a lively atmosphere, encouraging personal interactions that promotes these and other values.

This proposal drives inclusive sports and cooperative games that further the above values in the school.

Participation is another issue to remember when transforming the playground. Inclusive education fosters **participation by the entire student body**—always bearing in mind that we are speaking of and remembering all needs and disabilities that pupils may have—in all the activities carried out in the school, whether or not these are part of the curriculum. Participation is therefore one of the keys to achieving inclusive playtimes that eliminate exclusion, promoting values like happiness, teamwork, independence and solidarity.

To develop this aspect, it is necessary to promote initiatives that revitalise participation by all pupils. A proposal can start in the Department of Physical Education, so that the contents worked on in the classrooms can be used at playtime as alternative leisure.

Playtime can also be an opportunity to bring back **traditional games** and learn **games from other countries**, to appreciate cultural aspects from each of the cultures at the school. Reviving traditional games and introducing them into the dynamics of playtime does not just mean providing other ways of playing, but also of thinking and acting, while eliminating barriers and teaching about other cultures in schools by working on interculturality, cooperation and coexistence.

These proposed games may or may not be guided. As in the above case, they can be taught in the physical education area and played in the playground. They might also be part of an intercultural project worked on in the classroom.

In the case of older children, understanding playtime as a social space, the school could encourage the creation of a Play Museum created by the younger pupils with the games learned during the research carried out to develop the project.

3. CONCLUSION

“By me and my colleagues” is the slogan chosen for this year’s ONCE competition to promote and guarantee inclusive, fair, quality education in schools, using leisure as an essential way of developing qualities such as participation, social learning, sustainability, cooperation, self-determination, coexistence, mutual support and help.

We are aware of the difficulties involved when working on this in the classroom with older children who sometimes have permission to leave the school and who sometimes lack physical space in their schools and have to leave during break periods. This means that one challenge for us will be to create initiatives that can be carried out in schools to achieve our goals. However, we are certain that whatever the

challenge, you will be able to put these ideas into practice, in the knowledge that by doing so, we can all make society more inclusive and create a more humane world.