INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF TECHNOLOGY AND ACADEMIC RESEARCH

ISSN: 2224-6878 | Pakistan Volume 6, No. 8.

IF: 15.9 | 2026 http://waerasia.org/index.php/ijtar

# CULTIVATING WORK-RELATED VALUES IN PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS THROUGH ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

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Doi: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21871384

**Abstract:** The article explores the pedagogical potential of role-playing games for cultivating work-related values in primary school pupils. Work education is interpreted in an age-appropriate and ethical sense: respect for useful activity and professions, responsibility for a shared task, perseverance, cooperation, planning, care for tools and materials, and reflection on the social value of work. The study is based on qualitative analysis of sociocultural theory, experiential learning, social learning, research on pretend and role play, and international guidance on learning through play. The synthesis shows that role play can connect moral understanding with observable action because pupils must make decisions inside a simulated social situation, coordinate roles, solve practical problems, and experience the consequences of incomplete or careless work. The article proposes a five-stage model—preparation, role allocation, scenario enactment, complication, and reflective debriefing—and provides examples such as a bakery, repair workshop, school garden team, post office, health centre, and community clean-up council. It also explains teacher mediation, inclusion, assessment, safety, and the avoidance of stereotypes. The article concludes that role-playing games are effective when the learning goal is explicit, the scenario contains a meaningful shared product or service, and reflection translates the play experience into stable attitudes and habits.

**Keywords:** role-playing games, work education, primary school, responsibility, cooperation, experiential learning, professions, values education

**Annotatsiya:** Maqolada boshlang‘ich sinf o‘quvchilarini rolli o‘yinlar orqali mehnatga tarbiyalashning pedagogik imkoniyatlari o‘rganiladi. Mehnat tarbiyasi bolalar mehnatidan foydalanish emas, balki foydali faoliyat va kasblarga hurmat, umumiy vazifa uchun mas’uliyat, tirishqoqlik, hamkorlik, rejalashtirish, asbob-uskunalarga ehtiyotkorlik va mehnatning ijtimoiy ahamiyatini anglash sifatida talqin qilinadi. Maqolada tayyorgarlik, rollarni taqsimlash, vaziyatni ijro etish, muammoli murakkablashtirish va refleksiv muhokamadan iborat besh bosqichli model taklif etiladi.

**Kalit so‘zlar:** rolli o‘yin, mehnat tarbiyasi, boshlang‘ich sinf, mas’uliyat, hamkorlik, tajribaviy o‘rganish, kasblar

**Аннотация:** В статье рассматривается педагогический потенциал ролевых игр в трудовом воспитании учащихся начальных классов. Трудовое воспитание понимается в возрастно уместном и этичном смысле: уважение к полезной деятельности и профессиям, ответственность за общее дело, настойчивость, сотрудничество, планирование, бережное отношение к инструментам и материалам, осмысление общественной ценности труда. Предлагается пятиэтапная модель, включающая подготовку, распределение ролей, разыгрывание ситуации, проблемное усложнение и рефлексивное обсуждение.

**Ключевые слова:** ролевая игра, трудовое воспитание, начальная школа, ответственность, сотрудничество, опытное обучение, профессии

ISSN: 2224-6878 | Pakistan Volume 6, No. 8.

IF: 15.9 | 2026 http://waerasia.org/index.php/ijtar

Work education in primary school should not be confused with economic exploitation or the transfer of adult labour responsibilities to children. Its educational purpose is to form attitudes and habits that allow pupils to participate responsibly in family, school, and community life. These include respect for useful activity, willingness to contribute, care for common resources, perseverance, cooperation, planning, and appreciation of different professions. Such values are difficult to develop through verbal instruction alone. Children may repeat that work is important while remaining unable to organize a shared task, respond to a mistake, or understand how one person's effort affects others.

Role-playing games create a bridge between moral language and practical behaviour. In a role play, pupils enter a structured imaginary situation in which they act as bakers, builders, farmers, postal workers, designers, librarians, technicians, customers, or community organizers. They must follow rules, use materials, communicate, and make decisions connected to a shared goal. The situation is imaginary, but the social relations are real: pupils wait, negotiate, help, explain, repair, and take responsibility. Vygotsky emphasized that play allows children to act beyond immediate impulses and according to the rules contained in an imagined situation [1]. This capacity makes role play relevant to work-related values.

The pedagogical value of role play does not arise automatically. A noisy imitation of a shop may entertain pupils without teaching responsibility or cooperation. Learning depends on the design of the scenario, the clarity of roles, the quality of teacher mediation, and the reflection that follows. Research on play also advises caution against exaggerated causal claims; pretend play is one of several possible routes to development, not a magical method [6, pp. 1-34]. The present article therefore proposes a structured model in which role-playing games are connected to explicit educational objectives and observable forms of behaviour.

The study uses qualitative literature review, theoretical comparison, and pedagogical modelling. The conceptual sources include sociocultural theory, experiential learning, social learning theory, research reviews on pretend play, and guidance on learning through play [1–9]. The analysis focused on four questions: Which work-related values can be meaningfully practised by primary pupils? What features distinguish purposeful role play from unstructured imitation? How should teachers mediate the activity without controlling every action? What evidence can be used to assess value development ethically? Recurrent principles were synthesized into a five-stage instructional model.

Work-related values were operationalized as observable, developmentally appropriate behaviours rather than abstract declarations. Responsibility was represented by completing an agreed role and reporting difficulties. Cooperation included listening, sharing resources, coordinating actions, and offering relevant help. Perseverance involved revising a product or trying an alternative after failure. Respect for work was indicated by careful treatment of materials, recognition of the effort behind a service, and avoidance of ridicule toward occupations. Planning included identifying steps, time, resources, and standards. These indicators make it possible to discuss values without claiming to measure a child's moral character from a single activity.

Sociocultural theory explains why an imagined situation can support real development. In play, children use symbols, language, and shared rules to organize action [1]. A cardboard box can represent an oven, a table can become a service desk, and a written card can function as an order form. More importantly, the child's role carries expectations. The "postal worker" must deliver accurately; the "builder" must consider safety; the "customer" must communicate respectfully. These expectations create a zone in which pupils practise self-regulation and social

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IF: 15.9 | 2026 http://waerasia.org/index.php/ijtar

perspective under supportive conditions. Teacher guidance and peer collaboration provide scaffolding until the behaviour can be performed more independently.

Experiential learning adds a cyclical perspective. Kolb describes learning as the transformation of experience through reflection, conceptualization, and further action [3]. In a role-playing lesson, enactment provides concrete experience; the debriefing supports reflective observation; pupils formulate principles such as “quality checking prevents waste”; and a second round allows active experimentation. Without reflection, the game may remain an episode. Without a new attempt, reflection may remain verbal. The complete cycle helps pupils connect emotion, action, and concept.

Social learning theory emphasizes observation, modelling, and perceived consequences [4]. Pupils watch how classmates handle frustration, distribute tasks, or speak to a person requesting a service. The teacher can model respectful correction and calm problem solving. Positive consequences should be connected to the quality of cooperation and service rather than to status. For example, the class may notice that a team completed orders accurately because members checked one another’s work. This observation makes the value visible. Rewards should not turn helpfulness into a transaction; descriptive feedback is often more appropriate than prizes.

International guidance on learning through play identifies meaningful, engaging, socially interactive, iterative, and actively involving experiences as central characteristics [5]. These characteristics fit work-oriented role play when pupils pursue a shared product or service. A “bakery” becomes meaningful when the team must interpret orders, measure ingredients symbolically, organize production, and respond to a delayed delivery. Iteration occurs when the first system fails and pupils redesign it. Social interaction is not incidental; it is the medium through which responsibility and coordination are practised.

Stage one is preparation. The teacher defines the value objective, selects a familiar social setting, prepares safe materials, and identifies the central product or service. The objective should be specific: “Pupils will coordinate roles and complete a shared order,” rather than “Pupils will learn about work.” The teacher introduces essential vocabulary and invites the class to discuss what quality work looks like in the chosen setting. Preparation may include a photograph, short text, guest explanation, or observation of a real workplace. Stereotyped or inaccurate portrayals should be corrected before play begins.

Stage two is role allocation and planning. Roles should be interdependent, varied in communicative and practical demand, and open to rotation. In a school garden scenario, roles might include planner, soil preparation team, seed organizer, water manager, recorder, and safety checker. Pupils discuss the sequence of actions, available resources, and success criteria. The teacher ensures that no child is permanently assigned a low-status or passive role. Choice can be offered, but pupils should also experience roles that develop less familiar skills. Written role cards, symbols, or visual schedules support younger pupils and multilingual learners.

Stage three is scenario enactment. Pupils begin the activity while the teacher observes and intervenes minimally. The scenario needs enough structure to sustain purposeful action but enough openness for genuine decisions. The teacher may use prompts such as “What does your team need next?” or “Who has information that can help?” rather than providing solutions. During enactment, the teacher notes examples of responsibility, cooperation, communication, and difficulty. Intervention is necessary when safety, exclusion, humiliation, or complete breakdown occurs. Otherwise, pupils should experience the consequences of their organizational choices.

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Stage four is complication. A planned problem is introduced after the basic system is functioning. The bakery receives an allergy-related request; the post office discovers an incomplete address; the repair workshop lacks one material; the clean-up council must divide a limited budget; the library has two groups requesting the same resource. The complication converts imitation into problem solving. It requires pupils to prioritize, communicate, revise a plan, and protect quality. The teacher selects a complication that can be resolved with available knowledge and does not create distress. The goal is productive challenge, not surprise for its own sake.

Stage five is reflective debriefing. Pupils step out of role and reconstruct what happened. The teacher asks for evidence: Which action helped the team? Where did work stop? How was the problem solved? Whose contribution was initially invisible? What would the team change next time? Reflection should include the social value of the occupation and the interdependence of different roles. Pupils may complete a short self-assessment or group diagram. A second, shorter enactment allows them to apply one improvement. This final iteration is important because it converts discussion into changed behaviour.

| **Scenario** | **Shared product or service** | **Work-related values** | **Possible complication** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Class bakery | Accurate set of symbolic customer orders | Planning, measurement, quality, coordination | A customer reports an allergy or an order is delayed. |
| Repair workshop | Diagnosis and repair plan for model objects | Care, persistence, communication, resource use | A needed material is unavailable. |
| School garden team | Planting plan and maintenance schedule | Responsibility, patience, environmental care | Water supply is limited for one week. |
| Post office | Correct sorting and delivery of classroom messages | Accuracy, confidentiality, service | An address is incomplete or two names are similar. |
| Community clean-up council | Map, task plan, and fair division of resources | Public responsibility, teamwork, respect for labour | Budget or time is reduced. |
| Library service | Organized loans and recommendations | Order, helpfulness, respect for shared property | Two groups request the same limited resource. |

Teacher mediation begins before the game. The teacher frames every occupation as socially valuable and avoids presenting some roles as naturally belonging to boys, girls, particular ethnic groups, or pupils of a certain academic level. Role cards can use inclusive language and depict diverse professionals. The teacher also distinguishes play materials from real tools that require

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adult supervision. Safety rules should be few, visible, and connected to the scenario. For example, a construction role play may use cardboard components and measuring tapes but not sharp instruments.

During play, mediation should preserve pupil agency. Excessive teacher direction turns role play into a performance of the teacher's script. Too little guidance can allow dominant pupils to control resources while quieter pupils become spectators. The teacher can rebalance participation through questions, role rotation, time limits, and responsibility tokens. A useful prompt addresses the system rather than blaming a child: "The information is not reaching the delivery team. How could the roles communicate?" This wording invites organizational thinking and protects dignity.

The teacher's language during conflict is especially important. Work-related cooperation does not mean the absence of disagreement; it means handling disagreement constructively. Pupils can be taught a simple sequence: state the problem, listen to each view, name the shared goal, propose options, and choose a fair next step. The teacher may pause the game briefly to model this sequence and then return control to the group. Over time, pupils internalize the language of negotiation. Such learning is directly relevant to later collaborative study and civic participation.

Assessment should be formative, descriptive, and based on repeated observation. A single child who forgets a role card has not demonstrated irresponsibility as a stable trait. The teacher records specific behaviour: "Asked for clarification and completed the revised task," or "Used all materials without consulting the group." The first note identifies a strength; the second identifies a next step. A four-point checklist may be used occasionally, but qualitative notes and pupil reflection provide richer evidence. The purpose is to guide learning, not rank moral worth.

Self-assessment can focus on actions within the pupil's control. Suitable prompts include: I understood my role; I asked for help when necessary; I listened to the team; I cared for materials; I completed or reported my task; I can name one improvement. Pupils may circle a symbol and add one example. Group assessment should examine the system: Did information move? Were resources shared? Was quality checked? This prevents the strongest pupil from receiving all credit for a collective product and helps the class recognize less visible contributions such as organizing, cleaning, recording, or supporting communication.

Evidence of transfer is more important than performance inside one game. Teachers should observe whether pupils later organize classroom materials more carefully, complete rotating responsibilities, acknowledge the work of others, and persist with difficult tasks. A role play can introduce and rehearse these behaviours, but stable habits require consistent classroom routines. The class should use the same vocabulary—plan, responsibility, quality, contribution, revision—during projects, group work, and daily duties. Continuity transforms the game's lesson into a culture of participation.

Role-playing games are well suited to primary education because they combine imagination with rules, language with action, and personal interest with social coordination. Yet their effectiveness depends on educational design. Lillard and colleagues caution that pretend play should not be presented as the unique cause of broad developmental outcomes [6]. The present model accepts this caution. It treats role play as a structured practice environment within a larger system of classroom relationships, explicit teaching, authentic responsibilities, and reflection. The method is valuable because it gives pupils a safe opportunity to test behaviours and see consequences.

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The model also clarifies the meaning of work education. The objective is not early vocational specialization. Primary pupils should encounter a broad and respectful picture of human work: intellectual and manual, paid and unpaid, individual and collective, visible and often unnoticed. A role play can reveal that a service depends on planning, communication, maintenance, and care, not only on the person at the front desk. This perspective counters status hierarchies and helps children appreciate cleaners, farmers, caregivers, technicians, artists, teachers, and many other contributors.

Inclusion requires deliberate design. Pupils with language difficulties may use visual role cards and rehearsed phrases. Pupils with motor limitations can take roles involving planning, checking, communication, or digital recording without being separated from the central task. Children who become anxious in public performance can begin in a pair or take a behind-the-scenes role, then expand participation gradually. The aim is not theatrical excellence. It is meaningful contribution and reflection. Assessment must therefore value different forms of participation.

Role play can also connect subjects. A bakery scenario may integrate measurement, reading instructions, hygiene, economics, and persuasive language. A garden team can connect science, environmental responsibility, scheduling, and data recording. A post office can develop writing, address conventions, mapping, and confidentiality. Integration is educationally productive when the central learning goals remain visible. Too many objectives can make the activity diffuse. Teachers should identify one primary value objective and two or three supporting subject outcomes.

Teachers can begin with a twenty-minute micro-scenario rather than a complex full lesson. A simple “classroom materials service” requires one team to receive requests, locate items, record loans, and return materials in good condition. After ten minutes, the class discusses which procedures supported accuracy and fairness. The next week, roles rotate and one complication is added. Short recurring experiences are easier to manage and may produce more stable habits than an occasional elaborate performance.

Preparation should include a role map, resource list, success criteria, safety check, complication card, and debriefing questions. The teacher should anticipate possible dominance, exclusion, and stereotypes. Real professionals or family members may contribute short descriptions of their work, but the teacher should ensure that the information is age appropriate and not promotional. Photographs, tools that are safe to handle, uniforms, forms, and maps can increase authenticity. After the activity, pupils may write a thank-you note describing what they learned about the profession.

School-wide application is possible through rotating service projects that remain educational and safe: maintaining a class library, caring for plants, organizing recyclable paper, preparing an exhibition, or welcoming visitors with adult supervision. Role-playing can precede the real responsibility by allowing pupils to rehearse procedures and possible problems. In this way, play and authentic contribution reinforce each other. The adult remains responsible for safety and final oversight; children practise participation within clear limits.

Role-playing games can make work-related values visible, discussable, and practicable for primary pupils. Their strength lies in the combination of shared purpose, interdependent roles, decisions, consequences, and reflection. The five-stage model proposed here—preparation, role allocation, enactment, complication, and debriefing—helps teachers move beyond entertainment toward intentional education. When scenarios represent professions accurately, avoid stereotypes,

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include every learner, and connect with daily classroom routines, pupils can develop responsibility, perseverance, cooperation, planning, and respect for useful work. These qualities are not vocational skills in a narrow sense; they are foundations for learning, citizenship, and ethical participation in community life.

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