

PAULINE KERGOMARD AS THE FOUNDER OF KINDERGARTENS AND PUBLIC PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION IN FRANCE

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Le jeu, c'est le travail de l'enfant, c'est son métier, c'est sa vie.
(The play is the work of the child, it is his job and it is his life.)
Pauline Kergomard

Abstract. The article is dedicated to the 180th anniversary of the birth of Pauline Kergomard – the founder of kindergartens and public pre-school education in France. This is a theoretical work that refers to the life of the French pedagogue in a tabular presentation of the main elements of her biography, a publication activity and a link where her creativity is kept, educational philosophy and pedagogical concepts. The interpretation refers to kindergarten teachers and students on "History of Pedagogy" and "Preschool Pedagogy". Studying her educational concepts will help to the students to get aware and develop with basic and preschool educational matters.

Keywords: Pauline, Kergomard, play, children, and preschool education.

The idea of the theoretical presentation of the life and educational views of French educator Pauline Kergomard is dedicated to the 180th anniversary of her birth. This is one of the forgotten and little-known names with an unique contribution to pedagogical theory and also to the organization of kindergartens and preschools. The review of the educational philosophy and pedagogical practice presented in this article relates to the preparation of students in "Pre-school Pedagogy" and broadened the horizons of the kindergarten teachers.



Pauline Kergomard
Fig. 1.

The interest in Pauline Kergomard is reflected in the works of various of researchers such as Suzy Cohen, Geneviev and Alain Kergomard, Micheline Vincent-Nkoulou, Eric Plaisance, Augustin Mutuale, Elise Terdjman, Bernadette Moussy, Annika Blichmann, Christophe Brun. Affected from their interpretations of the life and work of the French educator, we summarize and share some well-known facts, but also those which have not attracted so much the attention or missing from the sight of the researchers.

Live road and some biographic elements. Pauline Kergomard was born in 1838 in Bordeaux. Very soon after appearing in the world, she sends her mother to her last earthly road. Her father, Jeanne Reclus, occupies an inspectorate position in French schools and her uncle Jacques Reclus teaches at one of the most prestigious colleges. Pauline spends most of her childhood in Orthez with her aunt Zeline Trigant-Marquey and later starts to study at Gironde. After completing her education she becomes a teacher at the same high school at the age of 18. The life of P. Kergomard is presented very clearly in several

moments and highlights through them.

Table 1.

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| 24.04.1838 | Born in the city of Bordeaux in a Protestant family. |
| 1861 | She moves to Paris and marries Jules Duplessis-Kergomard. |
| 1879 | She becomes chief inspector of the so-called "asylum rooms". |
| 1881 – 1917 | She becomes chief inspector of the kindergartens appointed by the Minister of Public Instruction and Fine Art Jules Ferry. |
| 1886 – 1892 | She is a member of the Higher Education Council of France. <i>This is the first woman who is a member of this council.</i> |
| 1887 | She organizes and creates the so-called „French Union for the rescue of childhood“. <i>This association exists in France for 131 years and today.</i> |
| 1897 | She founds a pedagogical union with the support of Ferdinand Buisson, Morris Buhour and other distinguished educators. |
| 13.02.1925 | She ends her life in Saint-Maurice at the age of 87. |

Pauline Kergomard's enormous contribution to the education system is influenced by her childhood, and her entire personal and professional life is dedicated to the education of children.

Educational concepts and pedagogical creativity. Pauline Kergomard is one of the greatest names in the history of pre-school education, although she has received significantly less attention and popularity than other educators in pre-school pedagogy. Initially, and throughout her life, Kergomard is inspired, educated and exemplified by many personalities who contributed to the development of pedagogy, and Marie Pape-Carpantier (reformer of education in French schools and an activist towards the problems of social injustice). Plaisance (1996) defines Kergomard as the "founder" of kindergartens in France.

In her work as an inspector and accurate pedagogue, Pauline Kergomard is actively involved in the issues of including **reading, writing, and mathematics in teaching children before the age of five**. She also pays special attention to the fact that kindergarten teachers are aware of children's psychology - that is emphasizing the importance of **early child psychology**.

Kergomard's pedagogical views are stored in her **creative and publishing activities** - educational books, collections of articles, papers, notes and correspondence. Under her leadership serious pedagogical guides are issued. In 1903, she collaborates in the "Children's Education" (*L'Education enfantine*) magazine for teachers in the kindergarten. Seven years later, it is under her authorship that **the first guideline for the care of kindergarten** "The child from two to six years old. Practical teaching notes." (*L'enfant de deux à six ans. Notes de pédagogie pratique*) One year later, she takes an active part in the creation of the "New Dictionary of Pedagogy and Initiation" (*Nouveau dictionnaire de pédagogie et d'instruction primaire*). In 1879 Kergomard writes her first **educational book** (*Les biens de la terre et causeries enfantines*) in which she presents two children whom the teacher Mrs Lambert taught by visiting home gardens and fields where children see the transformation of crops. In 1883, Kergomard writes a child-adapted **history of France** (*Histoire de France des petits enfants*), which includes the period from Roman Gaul to the third Republic. In 1890 she publishes an **educational picture album** entitled "Fifty explanatory pictures: Children's album" (*Cinquante images expliquées: album pour les enfants*).

All 53 educational texts for children under the authorship of Pauline Kergomard are stored and freely available at the following link: <http://data.bnf.fr/documents-by-rdt/12559946/70/page1> .

Practical activity and special contribution to the pedagogical treasury. Characterized as energetic, smart and dedicated to her profession, Pauline Kergomard is actively involved in organizing a lot numbers of conferences, symposia, national and regional pedagogical seminars, as well as numbers of social themes, advocating **women's rights** and handling with **poverty in families with children**.

The social context of the second half of the nineteenth century creates "asylum rooms" (Paris, 1826), the predecessors of kindergartens. In these rooms, all young children whose mothers work in the factories of the first industries in France are only cared for women. Therefore, the main function of these asylum facilities is social. According to Cohen's 2006 data, Kergomard reforms these "institutions" into pleasant places with a emphatically pedagogical function for children between the ages of 2 and 6, with suitable conditions for educational work with them, and tries to impose the concept of "**pedagogy of the little child**" to be child-oriented and where the leading activity is free, artistic and sports play. Thus, Kergomard creates the so-called "**Maternity School**" in France, and as Chief Inspector exempt all families from fees for these schools, which are funded by generous state subsidies. According to the Encyclopædia Britannica, maternity schools work 6 days a week, where children are **seen** in play, exercises and other entertainment activities, and receive basic guidelines for speaking, singing, painting, general knowledge and ethics.

Kergomard's pedagogical work provides a vision for child development, which is still up to date. She claims that the foundations for schooling are placed in the fragile age between 2 and 6 years. Elements in her pedagogical views are visualized in Fig. 1.

For Pauline Kergomard, the love for the children begins with a continuous observation of their needs, abilities and aspirations. More, there is a necessity for an environment where these needs, abilities and aspirations can be met and developed adequately. The attitude towards the children in the kindergarten must be as such as guarded, defended, respected, understood with all their individual particularities.

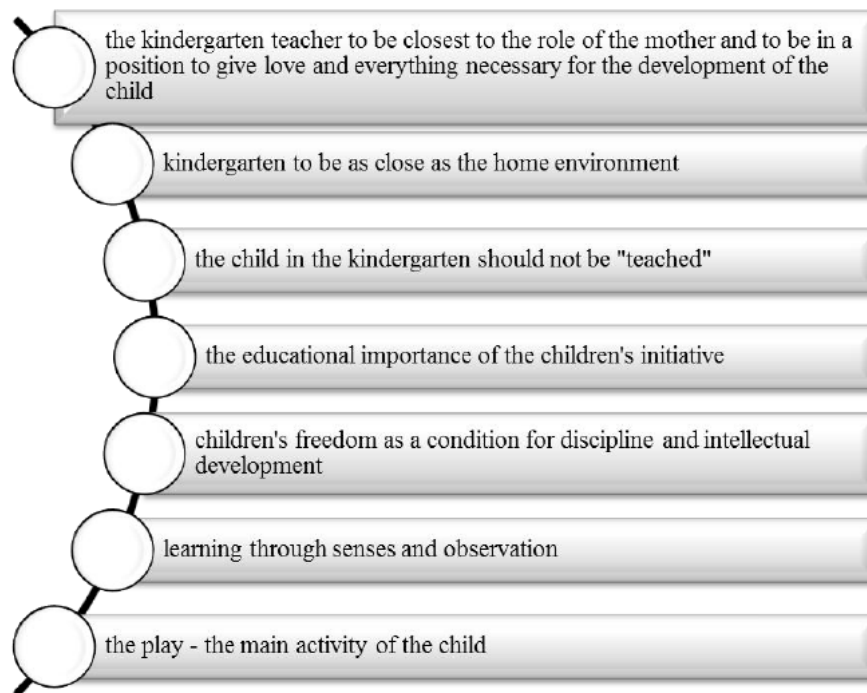


Fig. 1. Kergomard's pedagogical views

As a teacher in her young ages, Pauline Kergomard has a lot of work with many children, but her fundamental contribution far exceeds these prerogatives. **This French pedagogue manages to influence the lives of thousands of French children, through her educational system and practical pedagogical work at national level.** Pauline Kergomard deserves to be studied by students in pedagogical specialties because of her undoubtedly significant participation in the enrichment of the world classical pedagogical treasury. We can assume and it is clear that there are good reasons for her to be considered and recognized as the founder of public pre-school education in France. Maybe that is why now there are 113 primary schools and kindergartens in France, named after the pedagogue Pauline Kergomard.

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