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PREFACE

In 1960, the OMEP World Conference was held in Zagreb. After more than half a century, Croatia is once again hosting the 69th OMEP World Assembly and International Conference. Croatia's selection as the host this year is a recognition to our early and preschool education and to all practitioners and scholars who have developed it in accordance with the needs and rights of children.

The topicality of OMEP 2017 World Conference was recognized by all interested in the welfare of children – kindergarten teachers, professional associates, and scientists. A total of fifty-five world countries participated in the conference by sharing their experiences and new scientific achievements. Thus, for six days, Croatia was the centre of early and pre-school education – a place where the theory and practices of early and pre-school education came together.

The topic of the conference "Early Childhood Relationships: The Foundation for a Sustainable Future" reflects the need for early and preschool care professionals to put an emphasis on the importance of early childhood relationships. Very early, the child expresses the desire to engage in social relationships, not only due to his or her sense of psychological security, but also due to the development of communication skills and cultural competences, and thus the development of a positive identity. Adults and children are in constant interrelationship, whereby adults act from the perspective of authority, while children actively affect others (adults and children), with whom they are in different relationships in their immediate surroundings (in the family or institution), through independent actions. This is about the contemporary interpretation of the child as a social actor and partner, the child as a being of social relations, or the child in social relations capable of entering social interaction from birth. In other words, social experience, current social relationships, and general impacts faced by adults and children affect their value orientation and behaviour. The values that the child adopts and learns throughout life, which are subject to change but also necessary for living within the society, are a significant part of the world of quality and are associated with different people, things, and events. Primarily, through their active action (practice), the children adapt to certain structures and alter them in an active way. At the same time, their emotional and social component is equally important since the child learns to take care of others and contributes to a particular community. The social environment of the child made up of adults and other children instigates and encourages the child's imminent potential for research and discovery. In this way, learning becomes an enjoyable process for the child, and the problem is something that intrigues him and based on which

the child verifies his or her assumptions, which contributes to the child's active approach to the world. By looking at children during many activities, it is evident that they are always aware of their own thought processes, but are more motivated to question them thoroughly from different perspectives and to express understanding in their own personal way. Moreover, children wish to engage in dialogue with adults about important events in order to expand their existing understanding of the world continually. Hence, the emphasis is often on the relationship or pedagogy of relationships that are the starting point and the drivers for the overall development of the child. Pedagogy of relationships is a dynamic, complex network of connectivity and feedback initiated by actions and interactions between the child and the environment, which is the basis for successful learning and the welfare of the child. That is why in early childhood it is extremely important to provide the child with conditions for independent discovery and learning based on the play and other activities interesting to the child, and to create institutional conditions for a healthy growth.

The Conference Proceedings is the result of the work of many domestic and foreign scholars and practitioners who address approaches to early childhood from different aspects, starting with the different participants of these relationships. The common trait of all papers is the deliberation on how to ensure sustainability in the changing world. The publication before you does not provide you with answers you are searching for, but is calling for creating a more sustainable future for children around the world.

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INVESTIGATION OF CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY PRESCHOOL TEACHERS AGAINST UNDESIRABLE BEHAVIORS

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Abstract

Preschool education can be defined as the developmental and educational process that comprises the period from birth until the beginning of the primary education when physical, psycho-motor, social, emotional, mental and language development largely occurs and the personality is shaped, and plays a very important role in the lives of children. During this period, the importance of preschool, where children can build their own environment with their peers and have a setting for a healthy and natural development, is secondary only to the family. Effective implementation of educational objectives in preschools can be achieved through effective classroom management. Positive and negative student behaviors are directly associated with the behaviors of the teacher. The establishment of an effective classroom management system by the preschool teacher can help change the behaviors of all students. Therefore, determining the classroom management skills of preschool teachers is essential. Thus, this study aimed to investigate classroom management skills among preschool teachers and whether or not various variables acted on teachers' classroom management skills. The study population comprised preschool teachers who were employed as permanent staff at both private and public preschools in the districts of Ankara and who agreed to participate in the study voluntarily. The demographic information form developed by the researchers and "Scale for Identifying the Strategies Employed by Preschool Teachers Against Undesirable Behaviors" developed by Keleş (2015) were used for data collection.

Introduction

Formal and planned educational activities are carried out in a community environment generally referred to as classroom (Sadık, 2016) with students of similar age, knowledge and skills. Personality characteristics of students, their attitudes toward school and teachers, study habits and cultural backgrounds, relationships between students, physical classroom conditions and teacher-student interaction constitute the classroom environment as a whole (Erden, 2005). Numerous classroom and non-classroom situations affect the quality of education in the classroom environment where students with different characteristics and backgrounds congregate. It is not possible to discuss an effective educational environment in the classroom setting without effective classroom management (Terzi, 2002). However, adopting a non-interventionist classroom management is more effective as it is proximate to the humanist or student-centered philosophical and psychological foundation (Aksoy, 2001). The adoption of this approach particularly from preschool ages is essential to the development of self-discipline. The establishment of an effective classroom management system by preschool teachers is directly correlated with their ability to form democratic relationships with their students. Therefore, determining the classroom management skills of preschool teachers is critical. This study aimed to investigate classroom management skills among preschool teachers and whether or not various variables acted on teachers' classroom management skills.

Methods

As the study aimed to investigate the strategies employed by teachers in classroom management against undesirable behaviors, the questionnaire, a quantitative research method, was used to identify the views of 157 preschool teachers and to gather their feedback.

24.20% of the teachers participating in the study worked in Çankaya, 17.20% worked in Keçiören, 13.38% worked in Gölbaşı, 11.46% worked in Mamak, 10.83% worked in Etimesgut, 9.55% worked in Yenimahalle, 8.92% worked in Elmadağ, 2.55% worked in Altındağ, 1.91% worked in Kızılcahamam. 43.31% worked in preschools of state institutions, 35.67% worked in state preschools, 20.38% of the teachers worked in private schools and 0.64% worked in state kindergartens. Of the teachers who participated in the study, 97.45% were female and 2.55% were male. 37.58% of the teachers were in the 20-30 age group, 32.48% were in the 31-35 age group, 14.65% were in the 36-40 age group, 7.01% were in the 41-45 age group and 8.28% were 45 years old or older. According to the distribution of the educational background of the teachers, 51.14% had open education undergraduate degrees, 39.49% had formal education undergraduate degrees and 6.37% had graduate degrees. Furthermore, 41.40% of the teachers had 6-10 years of seniority, 26.11% had 1-5 years of seniority, 17.83% had 11-15 years of

seniority, 9.55% of the teachers had seniority of 21 years or above and 5.10% of the teachers had 16-20 years of seniority.

36% of the teachers were working with five-year-olds, 33% were working with three-year-olds and 17% were working with four-year-olds and 14% of the teachers were working with children from different age groups. 48% of the teachers had 16-20 children in their classrooms, 35% had 21-25 children in their classrooms, 15% had 11-15 children in their classrooms and 3% had 8-10 children in their classrooms. Assistant personnel were available in 62% of the classrooms, while 38% of the classrooms did not have any assistant personnel. During their undergraduate education, 37% of the teachers had not attended a practical classroom management course, whereas 46% had attended a practical course. According to 39% of the teachers, classroom management course they attended at university was adequate, while 61% of the teachers found the course inadequate.

In the study, the "Scale for Identifying the Strategies Employed by Preschool Teachers Against Undesirable Behaviors" developed by Keleş (2015) was used for data collection. The scale was developed to identify the strategies employed by preschool teachers in classroom management against undesirable behaviors. It comprises 30 items and 6 subscales: Reality Therapy/Control Model, Assertive Discipline Model, Teacher Activity, Kaunin Model, Social Discipline Model and Behavior Modification Model. These subscales concern the classroom management strategies employed by a teacher. In addition to the scale, a demographic information form developed by the researchers was used to collect demographic information on the study group.

The study received an official permission from the Ankara Provincial Directorate of National Education after which data collection was conducted in various districts of Ankara. The study data were collected from a total of 157 preschool teachers employed in different districts. The data collected from the study group were analyzed with SPSS 16 and were presented as frequencies and percentages.

Results and discussion

In the study, the data obtained from 157 preschool teachers were analyzed. The teachers were inquired about the most challenging aspect of classroom management. Their replies are given Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of the preschool teachers' views on the most challenging aspect of classroom management

The Most Challenging Aspect of Classroom Management	n	%
Lack of knowledge	14	8.9
Working with a mixed student group	29	18.5
Special needs Children	33	21.0
Physical classroom conditions	18	11.5
Preparing activities before getting to know the students	27	17.2
Parental Attitude	47	29.9

As can be seen in Table 1, when the teachers who were included in the study were asked the most challenging aspect of classroom management, 29.9% responded with parental attitude, 21% responded with special needs children, 18.5% responded with mixed student groups, 17.2% responded with preparing activities without knowing the children, 11.5% responded with physical conditions of classrooms and 8.9% responded with their lack of knowledge on classroom management. The fact that parental attitude was reported by the highest number of teachers as the most challenging aspect of classroom management indicates that parents interfered with how the teachers managed their classrooms. According to the teachers, the most challenging aspect of classroom management after parental attitude was working with special needs children. In the study carried out by Kale, Dikici, Sığırtmaç, Nur and Abbak (2017), the teachers stated that they did not prepare for inclusive education and considered themselves underqualified to prepare an individualized education plan. The views of the teachers also revealed that they were not well-informed about the adjustment section of the activity plan included in the 2013 Preschool Education Program. It can also be asserted that different requirements of children from different age groups also hindered teachers' control over the classroom. The solution recommendations of the preschool teachers for classroom management problems are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of the teachers' solution recommendations

Solution Recommendations	n	%
Developing education programs	31	20
Ensuring parental participation	44	28
Segregating students by age	42	27
Providing classrooms with appropriate physical conditions	19	12
Providing assistant personnel	27	17
Reducing class size	29	18

28% of the teachers recommended ensuring parental participation, 27% recommended segregating students by age, 20% recommended developing education programs, 18% recommended reducing the number of students in classrooms, 17% recommended providing assistant personnel and 12% recommended providing classrooms with appropriate physical conditions. The main purpose of parent-

school collaboration is promoting the development of children through the participation and support of parents. The collaboration between the teacher and the parents must be maintained to ensure the continuation of this development. Güleç and Alkış (2004) emphasized that the collaboration between teachers and parents can prevent the occurrence of undesirable behaviors in classrooms. Dinçer and Akgün (2015) reported that the availability of assistant personnel in classrooms did not have a significant effect on classroom management.

The responses of the 157 study group teachers to the "Scale for Identifying the Strategies Employed by Preschool Teachers Against Undesirable Behaviors" were evaluated based on the six subscales.

Table 3. Distribution of the teachers' replies to the Reality Therapy/Control Model subscale items

	Completely Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Completely Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I make sure the child thinks over their behavior and thereby guide the child towards positive behavior.	90	57.3	63	40.1	2	1.3	2	1.3	0	0
I question and learn the background of the undesirable behavior.	77	49.0	65	41.4	6	3.8	7	4.5	2	1.3
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I make sure the child realizes what they did was wrong by asking questions.	86	54.8	63	40.1	6	3.8	2	1.3	0	0
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I give the child opportunity to solve the problem after the undesirable behavior ends.	72	45.9	74	47.1	6	3.8	3	1.9	2	1.3
I find out why the child exhibited an undesirable behavior.	46	29.3	82	52.2	14	8.9	12	7.6	3	1.9
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I talk to the child.	94	59.9	47	29.9	4	2.5	12	7.6	0	0
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I play with the child for a short period to gather his/her attention.	17	10.8	98	62.4	25	15.9	9	5.7	8	5.1
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I discuss the problem with the parent to find a solution.	70	44.6	59	37.6	17	10.8	8	5.1	3	1.9
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I try to gather his/her attention by lowering and raising my voice.	36	22.9	86	54.8	9	5.7	15	9.6	11	7

The results for the Reality Therapy/ Control Model subscale showed that 59.9% of the teachers completely agreed with "talking to the child when he/she exhibits an undesirable behavior," while 5.1% of the teachers

disagreed with "playing with the child to gather his/her attention when he/she exhibits an undesirable behavior." Teachers may have chosen to talk to the children to understand the reason behind their negative behavior. Güven and Cevher (2005) determined that responses to "How Do You Approach to Children Exhibiting Undesirable Behaviors?" were centered on the verbal "communication" category. Teachers may have disagreed with "playing with the child to gather his/her attention when he/she exhibits an undesirable behavior" because they were reluctant to mislead the child into thinking the undesirable behavior is rewarded. In preschool, using brief games, finger play, songs, poems or rhymes as tools to gather attention can yield positive results.

Güleç and Alkış (2004) reported that the most common strategy employed by teachers in state schools was "trying to include students in the classwork", whereas the strategy commonly preferred and employed by teachers in private schools was "using various teaching materials to gather attention".

Table 4. Distribution of the teachers' replies to the Assertive Discipline Model subscale items

	Completely Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Completely Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
When a child hurts a fellow student, I make sure the other student hurts the child back.	0	0	1	0.6	4	2.5	20	12.7	132	84.1
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I threaten the child.	1	0.6	10	6.4	5	3.2	42	26.8	99	63.1
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I scold the child.	0	0	1	0.6	3	1.9	55	35	98	62.4
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I warn the child by reminding them of his/her continued misbehavior.	17	10.8	25	15.9	35	22.3	45	28.7	34	21.7
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I give the child a responsibility.	66	42	75	47.8	7	4.5	4	2.5	5	3.2
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I warn the child with my eyes.	5	3.2	15	9.6	21	13.4	47	29.9	69	43.9
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I warn the child by making physical contact.	3	1.9	14	8.9	8	5.1	27	17.2	105	66.9
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I warn the child by yelling at him/her.	1	0.6	13	8.3	11	7	32	20.4	100	63.7

According to the Assertive Discipline Model subscale results, 42% of the teachers agreed with "giving the child responsibilities when he/she exhibits an undesirable behavior", while 84.1% disagreed with "when a child hurts a fellow student, making sure the other student hurts the child back." Giving a child responsibility can help the child see him/herself as part of the class.

Table 5. Distribution of the teachers' replies to the Teacher Activity subscale items

	Completely Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Completely Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
When a child commits an undesirable behavior on a fellow student, I warn the child by saying "You hurt your friend. Apologize immediately."	12	7.6	57	36.3	31	19.7	30	19.1	27	17.2
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I give advice to the child by explaining how he/she should have behaved.	28	17.8	81	51.6	18	11.5	9.0	5.7	21	13.4
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I remind the child of the classroom conduct.	75	47.8	59	37.6	6	3.8	7	4.5	10	6.4

The results for the Teacher Activity subscale showed that 47.8% of the teachers agreed with "reminding the child of the classroom conduct when he/she exhibits an undesirable behavior", while 17.2% disagreed with "warning the child by saying 'You hurt your friend. Apologize immediately,' when they exhibit an undesirable behavior." Reminding the child of classroom conduct can be a solution but establishing the rules together with students should be the main focus. Sadık (2002) determined that the methods employed by preschool teachers to cope with problematic behavior involve using "verbal warnings, explanations and physical contact."

Table 6. Distribution of the teachers' replies to the Kaunin Model subscale items

	Completely Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Completely Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I deprive the child of something he/she likes.	33	21	34	21.7	28	17.8	25	15.9	37	23.6
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I reseat the child to a location where reoccurrence of an undesirable behavior is less likely.	36	22.9	58	36.9	37	23.6	16	10.2	10	6.4
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I reseat the child.	28	17.8	74	47.1	25	15.9	22	14	8	5.1

According to the Kaunin Model subscale results, 22.9% of the teachers agreed with "reseating the child to a location where reoccurrence of an undesirable behavior is less likely when he/she exhibits an undesirable behavior", while 23.6% disagreed with "depriving the child of something he/she likes when he/she exhibits an undesirable behavior". In reseating the child to a location where reoccurrence of an undesirable behavior is less likely, not letting the child think of it as a punishment is considered important. Therefore, it can be recommended that when encountered with an undesirable behavior, necessary measures should be taken prior to the occurrence of an undesirable behavior as a precaution, instead of reseating the child.

Table 7. Distribution of the teachers' replies to the Social Discipline Model subscale items

	Completely Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Completely Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I ask his/her classmates to not to play with him/her.	5	3.2	1	0.6	13	8.3	30	19.1	108	68.8
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I ask his/her classmates to not to talk to him/her.	2	1.3	9	5.7	12	7.6	37	23.6	97	61.8
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I send the child to the principal's office.	1	0.6	1	0.6	8	5.1	20	12.7	127	80.9

According to the Social Discipline Model subscale results, 3.2% of the teachers agreed with "asking the classmates of the child to not to play with him/her when the he/she exhibits an undesirable behavior", while 80.9% disagreed with "sending the child to the principal's office when he/she exhibits an undesirable behavior". When encountered with undesirable behaviors, problem solving skills of the children should be improved and preventive classwork should be prioritized. Uysal, Akbaba and Akgün (2010) reported that teachers firstly considered and imposed punishments when encountering undesirable behaviors.

Table 8. Distribution of the teachers' replies to the Behavior Modification Model subscale items

	Completely Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Completely Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I consult the school counseling service or, if it is not available in the school, I consult the Counseling Research Center in the district.	54	34.4	38	24.2	22	14	24	15.3	19	12.1
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I cancel the activity, deeming it too difficult.	17	10.8	15	9.6	27	17.2	39	24.8	59	37.6
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I sing rhymes to gather his/her attention.	24	15.3	52	33.1	36	22.9	30	19.1	15	9.6
When a child exhibits an undesirable behavior, I report it to the school management.	7	4.5	39	24.8	32	20.4	24	15.3	55	35

The results for the Behavior Modification Model subscale showed that 34.4% of the teachers agreed with "consulting the school counseling service or, if it is not available in the school, consulting the Counseling and Research Center in the district when a child exhibits an undesirable behavior", while 37.6% disagreed with "cancelling the activity and deem it too difficult when a child exhibits an undesirable behavior." An activity inappropriate for the developmental level of children can lead to distraction, which may lead to problems in maintaining classroom discipline.

In conclusion, when experiencing an undesirable behavior in the classroom environment, the teacher should immediately take notice of the behavior and decide on a solution. The most important aspect of

determining a solution strategy is the quality of the negative behavior. Negative behaviors may stem from distraction and be temporary and, considering the consequences, they may not be too disruptive. On the other hand, they may be persistent and aimed at harming teachers, other students, and school property and equipment, and considering the consequences, they may lead to serious problems (Öztürk, 2002). Uysal, Altun and Akgün (2010) found that the most frequently observed undesirable behaviors, in order of frequency, were distracting the class and disrupting the activity, problems among classmate and damaging teaching materials. Hence, the reasons behind these behaviors should be addressed in the first place.

Therefore, in order to minimize negative behaviors in classroom management, teachers should be given the opportunity to get to know the students and ensure collaboration with the parents. In addition, it is critical to investigate and identify the causes of negative classroom behaviors and to implement the solution recommendations.

Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, the preschool teachers had the most difficulty with parental attitude and special needs children and thought that these issues can be resolved by ensuring parental participation and segregating students by age.

The study results showed that, upon encountering an undesirable behavior, the teachers preferred to talk to the child, to give responsibility to the child, to remind the child of the classroom conduct, to reseat the child at a location where reoccurrence of an undesirable behavior is less likely, and to change the activity. It is also possible to suggest that, in addition to these preferences, the teachers' levels of education were also effective.

In the study, the following recommendations can be made for preschool personnel, teachers and practitioners:

- Teachers should be encouraged to use the non-interventionist classroom management approach should in the classroom.
- Applied seminars should be organized for teachers to promote classroom management and coping skills and teacher participation must be ensured.
- Support platforms should be established to help teachers cope with negative situations encountered in classrooms.

- Further comprehensive studies on coping with negative situations encountered in classrooms should be conducted.

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DOCUMENTATION AS A LISTENING STRATEGY; USING BEACH KINDY AS A PEDAGOGICAL PLACE

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Abstract

Early childhood education has a strong tradition of engagement with child centred learning, the natural environment and participation, which align well with Education for Sustainable Development and Beach Kindy, which utilises the coastline over a sustained period.

In this ethnographic research project, data were collated using documentation as a primary strategy with Early Childhood Educators using post it notes, A3 thinking pads and IPADS to record weekly visits and capture children's actions and verbatim comments related to the beach environment. From analysis of the data, the researchers note how documentation was used to evidence children's achievements and we conclude that utilising the beach on a regular basis offers the potential to develop the use of live documentation over an extended period which embraces the Reggio-Emilia philosophy and pedagogy of project based learning. We draw on the prevalent discourses related to documentation and the associated value of incomplete (or messy) wall displays as 'a commitment to life as mobility itself, in which the not-yet- known of the children's thoughts has space to emerge" (Davies, pg25).

Keywords:

Early Childhood Education for Sustainability; sustainability research; beach kindy; Reggio Emilia, documentation

Beach Kindy as an ethnographical encounter; An introduction to the context

During February 2017, a dedicated group of five Early Childhood Educators and a group of 15 young children, aged between 3 and 4 years, agreed to take part in an ethnographic research project with the authors of this paper. Locating our ontological position regarding interactions with young children, the researchers recognised the validity of acknowledging the children's voices in nuanced and authentic ways, and focus was placed on methodological work as 'philosophical, thinking work' (Sikes, 2003, p3) in dialogue *with* young children. The early childhood setting is situated in the North of England and is an independent pre-school catering for local children and their families. The pre-school is physically located on a stunningly scenic peninsular and a walk to the local beach can be experienced at a leisurely pace, whilst observing the key features of the natural and built environment. The pre-school was already involved in the implementation of the award winning (OMEP, June 2017), Early Childhood Education for Sustainability Framework (ECEfSF) in England, (Boyd, Hirst and McNeill, 2017), which has transitioned through various iterations based on continuous reflections and feedback from Early Childhood Educators. A recent inclusion within the framework is an explicit reference to the value of utilising the local environment to establish *place based learning* as a key feature of Education for Sustainability within Early Childhood Education. The researchers introduced the concept of 'Beach Kindy' to the Early Childhood Educators in an introduction session the week before the research commenced, thus resonating with Sustainable Development Goal 4.7 which emphasises the importance of 'all learners' gaining the knowledge and skills necessary to embed ESD and the ECEfS framework into their practice. The Early Childhood Educators shared some tentative concerns which reflected a lack of confidence related to personal knowledge of the beach environment or the Sustainable Development Goals, referred to subsequently as the SDG's (UNESCO).

Drawing on a non -deficit approach to researching *with* the research participants, the idea of utilising the beach was comfortably enshrined with the nomenclature 'Beach Kindy', chosen to reflect the Froebelian Kindergarden, literally interpreted as garden for children (Tovey, 2017) and key Froebelian principles, including respect, connectedness and first- hand experiences. The Early Childhood Educators noted their visits to the beach during the summer months and they acknowledged the visits as limited, due to a preference for warm weather and opportunities for creating sandcastles and experiencing snack time in an outdoor environment. A Froebelian garden includes exploration of the natural elements including water, where Tovey (2016) postulates the value of providing children with 'hosepipes, water pumps, gutters and pipes' (p67), therefore a project approach using the local coastline, offered children authentic opportunities to interact with and *for* the environment. The weekly visits to the local beach

resonated with the Reggio Emilia project approach (Rinaldi, 2006), where children were intrigued to observe sand laced with ice and shards of ice in the salty water, whilst *playing and exploring, actively learning and creating and thinking critically* (DfE, 2017).

The pre-school also operates under the regulatory gaze of the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) and works within the Statutory Framework of the Early Years Foundation Stage in England (DfE, 2017). Assessment and observation are shrouded in a developmental discourse with learning and development requirements which 'summarise the knowledge, skills and understanding that all young children *should have* gained by the end of the reception year' (DfE, 2017, p7). Documenting is subsumed in the EYFS (DfE, 2017) with assessment, progress reviews and 'Assessment at the end of the EYFS, The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP), with ongoing observations and relevant records' (DfE, 2017, p14). Many Early Childhood Educators in England note how learning is driven by outcomes and targets and this exploratory paper examines how documentation, 'listening and assessment, can be deemed compatible' (Bath, 2012, 197).

Early Childhood Education Discourses

The field of Early Childhood Education and Care has been recognised as a valuable phase with influences from neuroscience and Developmental Psychology and as Moss (2013, p.3) notes, it has 'been around a long time, emerging as a significant field in the nineteenth century'. Concerns have been raised globally about 'standards' and performance and the fear of children's 'unreadiness' for formal compulsory education, characterised in the English Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS, DfE, 2017) as readiness for the National Curriculum. The complexities of defining early childhood are entangled with the language associated with 'curriculum'. The curriculum provides a statutory framework of practice or a pedagogical tool that practitioners need to adhere to and follow, therefore, how this curriculum is shaped and defined is crucial for practice. Developmental psychology has tended to be the dominant narrative of early childhood curricula with a linear and predictable format which Malaguzzi noted as 'prophetic pedagogy' (Moss, 2016, P.xvi). Additionally, (Ang,2014, p.5) highlights a criticism of the 'cultural appropriateness 'of a curriculum based exclusively around developmental psychology which fails to recognise that universally, children emerge from socially and culturally diverse backgrounds. David and Powell (2016, p.3) urge a reconnection with the founding philosophical ideas of the pioneers. They argue that philosophy 'requires one to think hard and deeply about different topics, particularly those which raise issues or dilemmas of life'. Smith (2010, p.11) further states that young children need to develop 'greater flexibility of thought' to

consider creative solutions and possibilities to contribute to 'the major challenges facing humankind this century'.

Early Childhood Education has also emerged as a site for discussion around children's participation and associated rights promulgated in the United Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) however, whilst there is tacit reference to children's rights in the EYFS (DfE, 2017), the English statutory framework relies heavily on individual interpretation and decoding of pedagogical and philosophical beliefs. Davis (2014, p.22), argues for a 'revisioning of rights' with the 'evolution of children's rights from protection rights to children as rights holders'. The notion of Education for Sustainability derives from the original quote from the Brundtland report in 1987, 'Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED, 1987, p.16) however, Siraj-Blatchford, Smith and Pramling Samuelsson (2010) cite Sen's (2000, p.2) assertion that the *need* centred discourse was 'incomplete 'and required individuals with agency who can think and act. This paper presents Beach Kindy as a project approach which actively promotes 'children as rights partakers' (Davis, 2014, p.22) in line with Dewey's 'cultural- naturalistic –philosophy and educational theory' (Berding, 2016 p.51). Furthermore, 'Dewey connects the political and social notion of participation to the way in which children can acquire a place of their own in the community by joining in activities in a language community' (Berding, 2014, p.51). Davis (2015) outlines the synergies between Early Childhood Education and Education for Sustainability whilst differentiating between young children learning and playing *in* the environment and learning *about* the environment. She recognised that there was a deficit in 'laying the foundations *for* sustainability because they fail to explore human/environment interactions as causal in sustainability problems' (2015, p.25) which also resonates with Dewey's Participative democracy (Dewey, 1916) with children as part of a community.

Boyd and Hirst (2016) recognise that early childhood education offers opportunities to use alternative pedagogical approaches and Beach Kindy is one example that utilises water as a pedagogical tool of ocean interconnectedness. In September 2015, the new sustainable development goals included recognition of early childhood education (Goal 4; target 4.2) and caring for the ocean and its ecological systems (Goal 14). Beach Kindy adopts the principles of the world- renowned Forest school philosophy with regular visits over a sustained period and recognition of the process over product by knowledgeable, qualified and skilled early childhood educators. However, having more *knowledge* is not always an advantage when engaging with philosophy with young children and a sophisticated approach to philosophical dialogue relies on the educators' ability to acknowledge possible bias, or what Matthews (1994, cited in Murris, 2016 p.81) notes as 'staleness' or 'uninventiveness'.

Rinaldi (2006, p.7) suggests that the idea of what is knowledge needs to be challenged and not viewed in a linear subject orientated, predictable manner, but as Loris Malaguzzi described as a 'tangle of spaghetti'. She further stated that if viewing early childhood through the 'tangled spaghetti lens' learning becomes uncertain, unpredictable with 'standstills and retreats'. Berding (2016, p.51) also notes how Dewey envisioned that project work or process orientated learning rather than linear product driven approaches to education, should be a 'mutual action, the process of give and take'. This uncertainty also reflects Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) image of knowledge as a rhizome (Hirst, Boyd, Browder and Emery, forthcoming). Rinaldi (2006, p.8) likens Reggio to this rhizomatic way of thinking as having 'no beginning and no end' but instead focusing on the 'in between'. Additionally, Sellers (2013, p.xvi) suggests that Foucault (1990) extends this rhizome image as an opportunity to find out how far you can take your own thinking and understanding , to question if it is possible to think differently. Within Beach Kindy research, documentation was used as a pedagogical tool to support visible listening, (Rinaldi 2006) and the notion of Malaguzzi's 'fantastic theory' (2006, p.192) which draws upon the multiplicity of the hundred languages of children.

Documentation as a methodological tool during Beach Kindy

The idea of documenting during the Beach Kindy research was heavily influenced by the researchers' idiosyncratic experiences as early childhood educators, both in the field and within a higher education context as lecturers on an Early Childhood Studies degree programme. In discussion with the Early Childhood Educators, we sourced an A3 art pad which we referred to as a 'thinking pad', IPads and post it notes to capture verbatim comments. We also provided support packs for the Early Childhood Educators which included laminated images of native seaweeds, prompts and bird identification sheets. The preschool manager had been given the A3 thinking pad to support what Rinaldi (2006) refers to as 'visible thinking' and 'pedagogy of listening' during the duration of the project. This physical artefact could be used to capture experiences, thoughts and commentary, with all the nuances related to the project within and outside the preschool setting. The preschool also utilised a large whiteboard within their classroom environment for displaying images related to the project, a wall display board where they positioned the ECEfS framework poster to encourage reflection and the development of ideas from children and adults. Bath, (2012) considers participatory documentation in the English context and highlights how Early Childhood Educators (referred to as 'early years' professionals') often develop an interest in 'pedagogical models from Italy and Scandinavia' (p.191). The Early Childhood Educators involved in the Beach Kindy

project were keen to document the children's activities and experiences during the four-week project and they used the Ipads to take regular photographs of the children in the environment.

During the project, the Reggio Emilia approach to documentation was considered within the paradigm of observation, characterised as brief episodes or mini stories. These mini stories captured through photographs and comments from the children provided a synthesis that aimed to 'give the essence of the context and strategies children use, and more importantly, a deeper sense of what is taking place' (Vecchi, 2010 p.134). Vecchi (2010), further argues that the adult responsible for documenting must be tuned in to ways of how children are thinking, feeling, being and becoming, which she characterises as 'antennae vibrating' (2013, p.134). The researchers were also cognisant of the Mosaic Approach (Clark and Moss, 2005) and the idea of young children documenting using digital technology such as cameras. This offers adults a unique insight into the children's perspective and supports further dialogue around what children choose to document.

Visible documentation is commonly associated with the Reggio Emilia approach to Early Childhood Education (Rinaldi, 2006) and the metaphorical 'hundred languages' (Malaguzzi, 1998). Within the pedagogy of listening, Rinaldi (2006, p.65) notes the 'hundred, the thousand languages, symbols and codes we use to express ourselves and communicate ……listening as time, the time of listening, a time that is outside of chronological time – a time full of silences, of long pauses, an interior time'.

Documentation, it has been argued, should be a messy process. This idea of messiness, above a linear approach allows the unconscious to surface rather than allowing the conscious to dominate Messy, open ended documentation offers the right 'creative' side of the hemisphere of the brain to dominate rather than the scientific materialistic left side. Vandenbroeck, De Vos, Fias, Olsson, Penn, Wastell and White, 2017 (2017) notes most learning is filtered through the unconscious with a smaller percentage through the conscious. It could be argued that main stream cognitive approaches to learning in the early years focus upon the conscious at the expense of tacit learning. An example drawn from Aitken (2018) notes the current *readiness* discourse within the English Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2017) and an historic emphasis on cognitive development and education *throughout* the EYFS, thus, the school readiness agenda is set, not only for pre-schoolers but for babies and toddlers as well (Leach, 2011). Multiple authors argue that tacit knowledge is often lost within the target driven, standardised education system and concrete responses are validated with little time to develop ideas (Hansen, 2011, Moss, 2014).

Research highlights that children learn through their senses, through their culture, their experiences and the brain is constantly processing these events unconsciously. Taguchi (2011, p.214) contests that these multiple dimensional experiences within the world, support a 'relational materialist' way of thinking,

which reflects an interconnected approach to learning. Taguchi (2011, p.214) suggests that the more connections that children make, coupled with the realisation of a dependence upon the natural world, on other human beings, culture and their environments, 'the 'freer' s/he becomes to make new and increasingly more complex inter-connections'. When learning is restricted to the 'tacit', the brain is activated differently (Vandenbroeck,et al, 2017) suggesting a bottom-up process of absorption and assimilation. Adult led rather than child led learning experiences tend to engage the more materialist cognitive approaches and children tend to 'learn' only what the adult perceives is necessary or what they perceive the adult wants them to learn. Additionally, it could be suggested that documentation focuses more upon the spoken word, rather than the multiplicity of the 100 languages reflected in the Reggio Emilia approach. For example, it could be argued that the adult focuses upon what they perceived as important in the learning experience, what 'words' they wanted to hear the children say/repeat. Taguchi (2011, p.220, citing Hultman n.d) suggests that documentation used in this manner is contradictory to a democratic approach, non-hierarchy perspective because 'the child and the spoken words are still regarded as being hierarchical above all other matters involved in the process'. Thus, documentation should therefore reflect a 'rhizomatic' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) way of thinking, which does not necessarily make the thinking 'visible' though language alone, but recognises the 'ceaseless interrelational movements- flows of connectivity –among numerous possible assemblies of the disparate and the similar' (Sellers 2013, p.11).

Vecchi (2010, p.18) offers an interpretation of the iconic 100 languages (Malaguzzi, 1998) and suggests that the word 'language' in the poem is situated in place of the word *discipline* or *subject*. She further states not to consider the 'customary spoken languages in the traditional use of the word, but all those ways of communicating through which human thinking is brought to reflect, dig deeply, ask questions and make interpretations in different areas such as science, music, architecture, painting, cinema, mathematics, to take in all areas of human communication'.

Vecchi (2010, p.8) articulates the need for Early Childhood Educators to avoid the creation of 'hierarchies between languages' but to welcome a '*trans-disciplinary fertilizer*, *full of vitality* capable of welcoming different ways of thinking, not afraid of 'interference' and 'contamination' but considering them to be a possibility and not 'off the subject'. Taguchi (2011, p.223) reminds us that the visible thinking reflected in the documentation of the process offers reflections on 'future possibilities and potentialities in what *might become*', rather than a linear goal oriented product of what it was or should be. Writing for practitioners, Beauchamp (2016, p.297) also explores explicit and tacit learning with reminders to consider 'different subject lenses' where young children are supported to be musicians, poets, artists, geographers and scientists. This could be seen to resonate with aspects of the Mosaic approach (Clarke and Moss, 2001)

which highlighted the importance of the image adults have of both the child and recognising their full participation. Clarke and Moss (2005, p.8) note however, it requires a change in expectation from adults, as they must view children as 'experts in their own lives' and to 'provide a tangible focus for those responsible for young children to reflect together on children's perspectives, led by the children themselves.'

The idea of documentation offers multiple opportunities for revisiting, reinforcing and re reading the learning which resonates with Bruner's spiral curriculum (1960). Clarke and Moss (2005, p.8) say 'children must not be left on the outside of these discussions.' The use of photographs within the documentation provide a reflexive aspect to support what Rinaldi (2006, p.69) describes as the fragments of a memory that opens up the potential objectivity of the learning. Whilst recognising that the documenter will have one particular view of the image/material, when it is offered through openly displayed documentation, it becomes available for 'interpretive subjectivity of others in order to be known or reknown created and recreated, also as a collective knowledge-building event.' (Rinaldi 2016, p.69)

Findings, Analysis and Discussion

When discussing our findings, we openly acknowledge the subjectivities surrounding our perspective. As trained early childhood educators and tutors in higher education, our reflections and memories are littered with our own ideological perspectives related to adult/child interactions and our own personal epistemologies. The Beach Kindy research project highlighted some contradictions surrounding the purpose of the pedagogical documentation during the project. Early Childhood Educators primarily focused on adult lead, aesthetically pleasing entries into the A3 thinking pads and associated wall displays were considered as evidence for internal inspection by parents and external scrutiny from OFSTED. Bath, (2012) notes how research into children's participation within pedagogical documentation in England, noted how early childhood educators often collated children's work alongside adult chosen images and she noted the irony of the children's portfolios entitled, '*my* learning journeys' (Bath, 2012, p.198) and the paper argues for documentation as a communicative process rather than a statement related to a child's learning. Early Childhood Educators often feel obliged to collect and collate documentation that they feel represents the successful learning of a specific learning and development goal (DfE, 2017), as a dossier to be called upon to furnish proof for OFSTED. The need to validate and 'prove' children's progress for summative assessment is not uncommon, however, we argue here that 'proof', suggests an absolute and incontestable truth, which it could be argued, is far removed from the philosophy of Early Childhood

Education and the Reggio philosophy of pedagogical documentation. Here, we argue that Early Childhood Educators can adhere to the statutory requirements for learning and development (DfE, 2017) and work *with* children to document 'evidence' which allows for subjectivities, where the educator 'notices and interprets' (Bath, 2012, p197), information based on an image of the child as competent and confident, what Rinaldi (2006, p.66) refers to as 'meaning making'.

Nutbrown and Carter (2010, p.113) remind educators that observation can 'provide starting points' whereas assessment can 'be used to plan and review'. Practitioners need to see a clear differentiation between these two processes to ensure 'a basis for high –quality provision'. Furthermore, Carr, (2010) highlighted the need for practitioners to recognise the difference between the 'how' and 'what' of assessing early childhood practice. With constant external pressure for evidence 'measuring progress' or accountability, 'the knowledge, skills and understanding children should have at the end of the academic year' EYFS, (DfE, 2017 p.5) practitioners could potentially miss valuable opportunities. Rinaldi (2006) reminds early childhood educators to resist the dominant 'managerial' discourse which sways their judgements towards an accountability lens and develop a more democratic co- constructing approach. The English Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2017 p.3) provides guidance for practitioners to *adhere to* and *follow* and the language related to the learning and development requirements reflect 'managerial' attitudes with absolute terms like, 'must', 'should' and 'having regard'. Carr (2010, p.4) recognises dilemmas for educators when 'surveillance begins to encroach on intuitive and responsive teaching' and Brookfield (2005, p121), helpfully draws from Foucault in the context of critical theory (we had not considered Foucault this way), and notes how the classification of democracy (documentation as a democratic process) and power (relationships between adult and child), can't be viewed as simply 'good or bad' because it is far more complex, and is capable of being experienced as both oppressive and liberatory in the same situation. Here we argue that Early Childhood Educators can successfully self – monitor their learning with young children and articulate the value of a democratic, listening pedagogy.

The Early Childhood Educators in the Beach Kindy project were keen to record images and as guardians of the IPad, they chose which images to take. The rationale for the visual images of the children on the beach were often framed as 'useful for parent's evening to show them what we did' and for the individual 'children's records for the EYFS profile'. The omission of the children's voices resonates with the dominant discourse around the EYFS (DfE, 2017), however, responsive teaching (in this case the explorations around the beach environment), must be a balance of professional judgements between external accountability and the pedagogy itself (Carr, 2010, p5). Practitioners need to recognise that children are capable of being part of the process and they must find ways to 'document complex reciprocal and responsive relationships' in their learning environment, whether a beach, park, or classroom.

The practitioners involved in the research project, were clearly dedicated early childhood educators, and we tentatively suggest that there were many missed opportunities to utilise the materials, including the photographs as provocations (Rinaldi, 2006) or prompts to stimulate lines of inquiry for adults and children. Rogoff (1997 p.272) notes this process as 'stretching their common understanding to fit with new perspectives in a shared endeavour.' In this sense, the neatly presented thinking pad with adult selected photographs and adult text was viewed as an end product, seemingly stored for a specific purpose rather than as a tool for transformative participation (Rogoff, 1997).

The White board, another valuable source of documenting the experience, was set at adult height with laminated signs and images about the beach, limiting the children's opportunity to interact with the materials displayed on it. Interestingly, there were two comments noted by children pinned to the board which demonstrated clear articulate thinking about the beach environment. To illustrate this thinking we note one little boy (aged 3), who had noted the "rubbish" on the beach. He was keen to stress that rubbish must not be thrown away into the sea "because it will block the fishes homes". This comment offered a wealth of opportunities for a 'communicative process' (Bath, 2012, p190) beyond the adult scribed statement noted in the speech bubble on the whiteboard.

Davies (2014) considers documentation itself as a listening strategy and she defines the ideas of Karin Alnervik, who argues that 'documentation is not always innocent' (p.25). This intriguing line of inquiry highlights that 'while documentation plays a central role in the Reggio process of listening, and opening up for new thought, it can also be so incorporated into the quotidian practices, the striations of institutional life, -as-usual, that it serves no more than the reproduction of that institutional life' (p.25). The interactive Whiteboard displayed visual images of the Beach Kindy experience and as such, these images offered opportunities for dialogue with the children. The wall display board also noted some of the children's comments which were word processed and subsequently scribed by adults. Davies, (2014) highlights how 'Karin's own practices of documentation actively work towards keeping the documentation open and alive' and the practice of messy displays where children's words and images are placed on the wall as a work in progress, rather than finished works of art. Sellers (2013 p18) also considers how uncertain and ever moving ways of thinking, defined as 'lines of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) or as Lorraine, (cited in Sellers, 2005b p.144) characterises as 'creative mutations', can potentially alter the process in a destructive way rather than in a constructive manner. Sellers (2013 p.18) argues that 'a line of flight can become a line of destruction, reconstructing rigid lines of segmentarity, reproducing linearity.' The educator or the tool (such as the IPad), can restrict the learning process with a narrowly defined perception of this approach.

At this juncture, we noted the value of acknowledging the impact of educational history, training and associated learning outcomes, objectives and end products which also link to managerial accountability. Research has highlighted that when practitioners, educators or early childhood students are presented with unfamiliar pedagogical approaches, tensions emerge. Griffiths, Winstanley, & Gabriel, (2005, passim) cite this as a 'learning shock'. Boyd and Bath (2017, p.196) noted a 'perceived fear of creative freedom' when early childhood students were offered an opportunity to utilise documentation as part of their Reggio project, which resonated with research conducted by Maynard and Chicken (2010, p.38), when practitioners were unable to let go of 'prescribed, subject related outcomes'.

The Beach Kindy research also included visual documentation of the walk to and from the beach and dialogic interactions between adults and children. This rich data included comments from the children related to the local environment including interesting conversations related to signs and symbols in the environment. The children noticed the sign on the pathway interpreted by one child as 'no dog poo allowed!' and this line of inquiry lead to some interesting conversations related to the horse manure which littered the beach promenade. The children were engaging in some critical inquiry beyond the passivity required in the Communication and Language area of development in EYFS, where adults need to note how children, 'listen attentively,' and 'follow instructions' (DfE, 2017, p.10). During the journey through the local park, two of the children spotted a construction situated in the corner (noted by a sign as 'Critter Castle – Queens Park Bug House'). The preschool practitioners noted that although they lived and worked in the locality, they were unaware of the existence of the bug house, including the fact that it had been built by the local community. Additionally, the children noted some beautifully painted and crafted stones hanging from a tree and these images and objects were imbued with the local community and culture, thus the value of 'paying attention to small things' (Hoelscher and Alderman, 2004, p.352) highlights the value of documenting the children's observations.

The Thinking Pad highlighted neatly displayed photographs with missed opportunities for *visible thinking,* for example, an adult posed query,

Adult: *"Why is there grass in the sea?"*

Child: *"Someone has thrown seeds into the sea!"*

This relevant line of thought was noted as a response to the query and situated next to an unrelated image of the beach experience. The growth of the Spartina Grasses had been developed with members of the lifeboat crew and was wholly relevant to the children's local context, therefore, from an

education for sustainable development perspective, there were missed opportunities to support the development of awareness about the shoreline and the different species of grasses growing there for the ecosystems to survive. This was an opportunity for a shared endeavour (Rogoff, 1997), a co constructed project about the different grasses, thus resonating with SDG 4.7 where 'all learners', learn together. This was further highlighted as a lost opportunity to reflect upon education for sustainable development as a shared community endeavour at the local Life Boat Station. During the visit one of the lifeboat crew provided valuable knowledge of how the sand dunes and shorelines had suffered and why Spartina Grasses were spreading along the sand dunes into the sea. He noted that the '*seasons had changed'* and that this had caused more '*slit in the River Dee'*. He further highlighted that if this progress continued it '*would encourage mosquitoes* '. This was an opportunity for the adults and children together to reflect on how their coastline was changing over time, historically, geographically and with potential health implications, resonating with Global concerns. Nora (1989, p.7) noted that as a consequence of globalisation and 'interior decolonisation' we 'have seen the end of societies that had long assured the transmission and conservation of collectively remembered values.' This historical and geographic capital would be lost without recognising the intergenerational contributions from within the diverse community including members of the life boat station. Within the EYFS (DfE, 2017) it requires practitioners to support children to develop an 'understanding of the world'. This was an opportunity for a shared research project with the community and with their families intergenerationally, providing evidence (rather than proof of learning) for the statutory framework requirements. The EYFS (DfE, 2017 p.12) requires evidence of children knowing 'about similarities and differences in relation to places, objects, materials and living things,' and to have the ability to 'talk about the features of their own immediate environment ....' Researching together about the Spartina grasses would have supported children's understanding of biodiversity in a real context, as well as providing knowledge about their own culturally specific locality. Research clearly links children's experiences with nature and the development of an ecological mind set, imperative for education for sustainable development. However, Davis (2012, p.69) reminds us that it is not just one experience that creates 'a sustainability frame of mind, but many over time, crucially beginning in early childhood.'

Comments within the thinking pad offered opportunities for a messy sharing of ideas, mark making and investigations that had the potential 'to develop a sense of agency and to make a 'difference'. (Pratt, 2012, p.145). Robinson and Vaealiki (2012, p.176) ask practitioners to 'think globally and act locally' to encourage participating communities of action. This approach favours involving children, practitioners and their families with their locality. It has to be meaningful and rooted in their local context, for example, watching how over the seasons the dunes change shape and how the Spartina grasses grow

around them or comparing species of grasses. As Pramling Samuelsson and Kaga, (2008, p.12) stated it 'needs to be rooted in the local, concrete reality of young children if it is to have real meaning and impact.'

An invitation to view 'the completed documentation' highlighted that there was no recognition of the journey to and from the setting, thus suggesting an adult focus on the creation of potential 'memories' within the documentation. The absence of imagery surrounding the locality represents a potential void, one where mapping the walk could have provided a holistic experience for recording with the children. Bath, (2012, p, 199) notes how Alison Clark (2011), has developed the idea of map making *with* children and this she argues offers a plethora of opportunities for 'meaning making' and 'cultural brokerage' (Chalfen and Rich, 2007, cited in Bath, 2012, p.199).

With this idea of cultural capital, we also note the value of cultural production (Kuttner, 2015) and draw on Pierre Nora (1989, p.9) who states that 'memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects' but these need to be represented. Here we return to Malaguzzi's hundred languages (1998) and suggest that the Early Childhood Educators involved in the project, embrace these spaces (ie, the walk) and consider more creative ways to capture and document, with messiness featuring as learning *with* and *for* Education *for* sustainability in early childhood education.

Conclusions

Boyd and Hirst (2017) suggest that Beach Kindy offers a sensitive platform for reciprocal, authentic communication related to critical and current topics regarding Education for Sustainability. As researchers involved in the Beach Kindy project, we noted the value of incomplete (or messy) wall displays, democratic joint enterprise and co-construction including conflict, questioning and subjectivity (Mouffe,2000).

The findings highlight the complexities involved in the documentation process in the context of the EYFS (DfE, 2017) and the associated difficulties for educators to see children as equal and co constructors within their own learning. There was a clear link demonstrated to the statutory requirements of the EYFS (DfE, 2017) and providing evidence. There was also a keenness demonstrated and interest in learning about education for sustainability that developed during the course of the research, however as Davis (2015) notes, this must be a continuous process not restricted to one off visits or experiences. The preschool is trialling the Early Childhood Education for Sustainability framework (Boyd, Hirst and McNeill, 2017) which provides clear links to the 3 pillars of sustainability , the EYFS (DfE, 2017) ,place based learning within their locality and the nine eco school themes. Therefore ,the research will continue into the

next academic year and provide more opportunities to develop a more relaxed ecological mind-set, whilst acknowledging children's own place within their learning. Documentation will be utilised again and there is an expectation that the children's rights to messy open ended documentation will feature more strongly over adult evidence based documentation.

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CRITICAL INCIDENTS IN THE INITIAL FORMATION OF TEACHER'S PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Presented study is focused on the issue of creating an initial professional development of teacher. Our aim was to understand and interpret interfaces (compliances, differences) of development with an emphasis on typology of critical incidents and considering the teacher's awareness of professional reality shock. The focus of our scientific study is on those critical moments in teacher's professional career that brought about change and how these changes improved their teaching practice. In a collaborative study report of 10 experienced teachers, who reflected on the critical moments of their teaching experiences in state kindergartens in Slovakia, we established a typology of these incidents and we induced those exact components that crystallize the professionalization, but also those which paralysis them. Using autobiographical narrative and 'Life history method' as a theoretical framework, these ten teachers present a number of insights from their personal lives and allows the researchers to explore a micro-historical (individual) experiences within a macro-historical (socio-cultural) framework.

Introduction

This paper analyses on the issue of critical moments in the professional career of a kindergarten teacher. We intended to seek answers to the question of how he/she is formed by certain stress situations in his/her induction and in shaping his/her identity. Load of critical moments is mostly concentrated in the initial period of employment. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) state that there are several studies suggesting that more than 50 % of newly qualified teachers leave their job within 5 years from the commencement of their teaching practice. Veenman (1984) found that a college graduate, who starts working, encounters many problems related mainly to the focus of university studies on theoretical knowledge. His research also shows that the first year of teaching practice is very demanding and the most difficult in the entire career. This presents an interesting issue for researchers, which can be addressed from various aspects. From the perspective of career development determinants, critical moments in professional career path, characteristics of a successful teacher – expert, identification of problems in teacher's induction, or specifics and methods of teaching practice of students of pedagogy studies.

This study is conceived as an outcome of two parts, the theoretical being the first part, while the second part represents an actual research.

From the epistemological point of view we assume constructivism, according to which all knowledge is subjective, as each of us creates it on his own, based on our own experience and living. It represents a certain compromise with reality. A number of theories are based on the constructivism. However, we work with a social cognitive theory that puts emphasis on the social interaction in learning mechanisms. Each of these theories provides some basic statements about human behavior. Bandura argues that the key to all behavior manifestations is the learning process. By process of learning, he understands the way in which the behavior is modified and regulated. Consistent with the authors Miller and Dollard, 1941, Rotter, 1954, and Bandura with Walters, 1963 uses the term social learning. According to these authors, the social environment of man can be described as a set of reinforcing and oriented incentives – in words of Helus (1973, p. 77) "rewards and keys". Their structure forms a "social labyrinth" by which the individual learns what is the easiest way to meet their needs. The personality is mainly formed in social interactions. Therefore, "the formation of the personality is basically the process of social learning" (Nakonečný, 2013, p. 484).

Albert Bandura, as one of the foremost theorists of social learning, has created a relatively new model of human psyche determination. Bandura himself (2006, p. 65) describes it as "one of the attempts to create a functional balance between the two determinant types (both external and internal). When we ask about the condition of human behavior by internal or external forces, it is not possible to answer this question by leaning on one of these possibilities. "Human organism behavior" is not the result of mechanical combinations of external and internal influences "(Growth, Ruisel, 2000, p. 203). External determinants

of behavior (rewards and punishments), as well as internal determinants (beliefs, ideas, expectations), are part of the system of influences affecting the individual with which they interact. The explosive relationship between them is as described by Janoušek (1992, p. 386) "more probable, subordinate to the constellation in time: once are the strongest forces of the environment, sometimes our conviction or expectation."

Bandura (1997, p. 6) explains the action of man as a sum of three dimensions: personality factors, the environment in which one lives, behavior in the sense of his or her own activity, whether past or present. These three groups of elements have a fairly wide range. Personality factors include cognitive, affective and biological factors. The environment encompasses the entire human environment. Behavior understands human activity in any life situation. Human thinking and acting Bandura understood as a product of dynamic interaction of personality, environment and behavior. The relationship between these three elements is subject to "reciprocal determinism" (Bandura, 1989, p. 2). The reciprocal - mutual advantage, in conjunction with the triadic, emphasized by its three elements. Determinism, according to Janoušek (1992, p. 386), means the resulting effect of a set of mutually interconnected influences, which is more likely to be understood as probability than linear."

The concept of reciprocal determinism is very important in Bandura's theory. As he highlights the "social cognitive theory deals with reciprocal determinism as with the basic law when analyzing psychosocial phenomena at different levels of complexity, from intrapersonal development to interactive functioning of organizational and social systems" (Bandura, 1978, p. 356). Bandura (1997, p. 6) depicts triadic reciprocal determinism as follows:
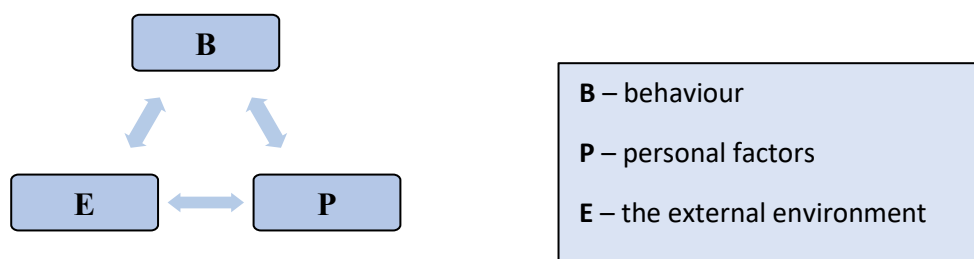
Scheme 1   *Triadic reciprocal determinism by A. Bandura (1997, p.6)*

In Bandura's understanding, any of these elements can have a causal effect on the other two. This can be explained in general, such as Hall and Lindsey (2002, p. 429) state: "The human conviction of what he/she is capable of doing and what consequences it will have afterwards, affects his/hers actual action, which is realized in an environment that can change his/hers expectation." The model furthermore assumes that in a different time period apart from interacting with each other one factor may come to the fore. The triadic reciprocal determinism can be understood according to Nakonečný (2013, p. 484) that

"by establishing and maintaining the internal balance is created an ensemble of external and internal factors and feedback from this process, which stem from the discrepancy between "it is" and "it should be" s and has the nature of self-regulation. At the same time, it also expresses a feedback balance outreached between reactive and active aspects of doing, which means not only "to be in a situation" but also to "create a situation".

The interaction of Bandura's model is consistent in the sense that behavior itself interacts and influences personal and situational factors, is not their ordinary product. From these explanations results that people can re-think and regulate their own behavior. They are not only "pawns in the game of environmental influences" (Hall, Lindzey, 2002, p. 428). Causality is not based only in the environment. Man and the environment interact with each other. Many aspects of personality functioning involve human interaction with other people. Adequate personality theory, according to Bandura (1977b, p. 191), has to "count with the social context in which behavior is acquired and maintained." In fact, Bandura (in terms of the objectives of his mostly experimental researches) according to Vyrost (2000, p. 204) "so far puts the greatest emphasis on the cognitive aspects of human personality." The usage of ideas and symbols as regulators of human behavior effectively influences how we behave. Recognition of these connections opens up new concepts such as: the idea of a future result, estimating the probability, setting a goal, creating management of strategies and others. All these cognitive internal determinants of behavior do not rule out the impact of past experience, on the contrary, the effect of conditionality (rewards and penalties) and observational learning is reflected. In fact, as described by Gross (2000, p. 204), "as far as the real behavior of real people is concerned, this action is largely carried out without the presence of external regulators." Very important so to say the immanent part of A. Bandura's concept is, according to Janoušek p. 387) understanding of freedom. In it, Bandura plastically manifests his effort to deflect himself from the unilateral determinism of previous periods. "Freedom is conditional upon self-influence, self-regulation, in particular, the possibility of choosing from the set of choices and right to exercise this choice" (Janoušek, 1992, p. 387).

Bandura says that: "With a model (triadic reciprocal determinism), where everything interacts with one another, one can feel a little lost" (Bandura, 1983, p.10). He claims that there is a center, starting point, a self-system which he does not understand as the psychological factor that controls our behavior, but according to Bandura (1978, p. 348), "it is more of a relationship to cognitive personality structures that act as reference mechanisms and organize underlying perceptions, evaluation and control of behavior. "The function of self is, according to Bandura (1978, p. 346), to" regulate behavior by a continuous activity in self-observation, in assessment and evaluating processes and in self-responses -reactions to one's own behavior." What really comes into play is, according to Bandura, the self-regulation of learning and performance, which he and his colleagues have been studying since the mid-60s (Bandura, Kupers, 1964,

Bandura, Mischel, 1965a, Bandura, Whalen 1965b Bandura Grusec Menlove, 1967a, 1967b and others). In 1986, the self-regulatory model takes this shape (scheme 2).

SELF-OBSERVATION	JUDGMENTAL PROCESS	SELF-REACTION
Performance Dimensions Quality Productivity Originality Sociability Morality Deviance **Quality of Monitoring** Informativeness Regularity Proximity Accuracy	**Personal Standards** Level, Explicitness Proximity, Generality **Referential Performances** Standard norms Social Comparison Self Comparison Colective Comparison **Valuation of aktivity** Valued Neutral Devalued **Performance Determinants** Personal External	**Evaluative Self-reaction** Positive Negative **Tangible Self-reaction** Rewarding Punishing **No Self-reaction**

Scheme 2

Sub procesess of selfregulation of behavior (Bandura, 1986, p. 337)

As described by Hall et al. (2002, p.430) these three groups of sub processes are in constant interaction." During observation of actual behavior (self-observation), an individual compares with certain standards and experiences positive and negative emotions, depending on the results of this comparison. Evaluation (self-assessment processes) can then be an incentive to behavior change or change the observed dimensions. In these intentions we can observe ourselves in the terms of such performance aspects of personality as are quality of performance, originality of thoughts, or work, etc. In his work, Bandura paid special attention to the subjective perception of the goal (Dvorská, 2015).

In self-regulation, the following attributes of goals play the important role (Brichcin, 1999, Hoskovcova, 2006, p. 63): specificity, enticing, urgency, engagement, and degree of active participation. In summary, it can be paraphrased that what determines whether a person will notice the goal and whether or not he/she will attempt to achieve this goal is not just a reward or punishment that could affect it, but the "subjectively considered value of the goal" (Bandura 1994, p. 70).

In self-assessment processes, current performances are compared with criteria, standards, or goals. An important place in the development of the autoregulation theory was the genesis elaboration of standards and their interiorization based on observation of models (more eg Bandura, Grusec, Menlove, 1967).

An important point in social cognitive theory represent self-concept components (which Bandura, 1997, p. 20 compares to the layer). They act as essential mechanisms for managing and evaluating their own social behavior (self-action). Our behavior can be judged in this respect according to personal standards in comparison with the behavior of others or other ways. And finally, "based on self-observation and self-assessment we can evaluate ourselves positively or negatively, we can reward or punish ourselves" (Hall, Lindzey, 2002, p. 429). Based on observation of models, idols (parents, teachers) we create behavior standards by interpreting feedback on our performances and by regulations (verbally, by example, etc.) given to us by the authorities.

Our self-evaluation and self-assessment and the consequences that we derive from it (auto-reaction) also arise from our experience and rise from our socio-cultural environment. However, according to Bandura (1978), not every act and its consequence lead to auto-reactions. In the sense, activities that are not relevant to the subject, or performances for which an individual does not feel responsible, do not induce auto-reaction. In this context, Bandura focused on the problem of "selective activation and deactivation of autoreactive consequences" (Hnilica, 1993, p. 444). Sometimes a commitment of an immoral act by individual who has developed moral standards does not necessarily lead to negative self-evaluation or dissatisfaction with his or her own conduct. The individual can then use other techniques of cognitive reconstruction to redefine his or her own actions, their consequences, and possibly also the status of the moral character of the victim (e.g., Bandura, 1978, pp. 344-358).

A key component of the self-system is, according to Bandura, self-efficacy, which, in his view presents, "our self-perception of how we can operate in a given situation" (1997, p. 21). Bandura considers self-efficacy as a "central mechanism of self-regulation" (Hoskovcova, 2006, p. 58). For a teacher, his self-efficacy represents "the most important self-regulatory element of his work" (Gavora, 2008, p. 223).

Bandura also claims that man's conviction of his/her abilities is the basis of human agency and works in all areas of human activity, so it is a universal concept. The socio-cognitive theory differentiates the perception of the human agency, that is, the action of a particular individual and the collective agency, i.e. the working activity of the collective as a (whole) group. Human agency is a predominant concept that Bandura explains through the concept of self-efficacy. As a human agency is part of self-efficacy, the collective agency remains part of collective self-efficacy.

Bandura (1997) describes the school system as a whole. He talks about how the educational organism presents a number of different challenges and stressors, and also that it includes many unfavorable conditions that schools must constantly cope with. Bandura states that these conditions reflect the

widespread societal and economic ailments of society, and that these undesirable facts affect education and impair the school environment. And to make matters worse – as Bandura adds, there are a number of other issues relating to the teaching profession. These are carefully documented by Ashton and Webb (1986). In particular, they involve a workload requiring constant intensive interaction, responsibility for meeting high public demands, worrying bureaucratic practices, varied (bad) quality management, scarce resources, lack of promotion, a large share of so called problem children, inadequate paychecks, low employee status in our society, or inadequate public recognition of success in our profession. In other words, the education system is literally posed by conditions that can very easily undermine the teacher's self-confidence in his/her own ability (self-efficacy) and virtually eliminate work satisfaction. Given the many obstacles, it is remarkable how many schools achieve great academic successes.

Bandura emphasizes that people's belief in their self-efficacy plays an important role in their work, and claims that people who are convinced that they have strong self-efficacy act, think, and feel differently than people who are convinced that they have weak self-efficacy.

"Self-efficacy is the ability to produce the desired or intended result" (Bandura, 1997, p. 20). However, he noticed that individuals do not function as lonely elements and that they form an opinion about the collective abilities of the group to which they belong.

He defined the conviction of collective self-efficacy as "a group shared beliefs in its shared ability to organize and execute an appropriate process required to achieve particular level of knowledge" (1997, p. 477).

This collective belief focuses on the operative capabilities of the group. "Conviction in collective self-efficacy is the performance potential of the social system (schools) as a whole" (Bandura, 1997, p. 469). Group functioning is a product of the interactive and coordinating dynamics of its members. Bandura argues that interactive dynamics creates the urgent features of a group that ultimately means more than the sum of individual attributes. There are a number of factors contributing to interactive effects.

These factors include a mix of knowledge and competencies in the group; how the group is structured and how its activities are coordinated; how well the group is led; the strategy which recognizes; and whether the members of the group interact with each other in a way that helps and supports or subverts. Just as the self-efficacy plays role in an individual functioning, the belief in collective self-efficacy plays and influences the performance of the group in different areas of functioning such as, for example business, politics, sport or education. Teacher's collective self-efficacy refers to convinced teachers that they should influence their collective abilities. Bandura assumes that self-efficacy influences success and motivation. Bandura's research (1997) has shown in the academic context that belief in self-efficacy plays an important role in influencing success and behavior, but moreover, the collective sense of self-efficacy plays a key role in influencing important achievements for teachers.

Bandura is convinced that the belief in collective self-esteem is an urgent group attribute which, moreover, works far better than just the sum of beliefs in the self-efficacy of individual members. The belief of members in their collective self-esteem has an impact on the future they seek, on to shaping plans and strategies, on how many efforts they put into group effort, their perseverance, when their collective effort for quick results fails and on their susceptibility to discourage. These processes, which are activated by shared belief of self-esteem, have an impact on how well the group will work together and how much it will achieve as a group. Bandura also notes that the ability/skill is just as good as its actual realization. The self-confidence with which people access and manages challenging tasks determines how they use their abilities. The vicious doubts about oneself can creeps into the mind of man and very easily reverse the best of his/her skills (Bandura, 1997, p. 35)

All factors have significant impact in induction of a teacher. His/her colleagues create a certain idea of his/her behaviour, professionality or competence, but the most important is his/her idea of himself/herself; of what kind of teacher he/she is, what teacher he/she will be and what teacher he/she could be. Bandura (1997) calls this dimension a self-efficacy, while he understands the term as a belief, conviction of a man about his abilities and actions. The idea of a teacher about his/her potential to teach influences his/her activity, performance and motivation. In relation to the specific of Bandura's social cognitive theory Bertrand (1998) describes the importance of indirect learning, symbolic idea, awareness of one's own activity, self-regulation, as well as a model.

Through indirect learning we acquire many stimuli for inner processing. The teacher does not learn only by carrying out teaching activity, but also by observing, analysing and evaluating how others teach, or how others act in various didactic situations. He/she can then internally identify and decide, whether he/she will use any of the observed teaching methods or not.

A symbolic idea is another characteristic of social learning. It has a very significant importance in induction of a teacher in new environment, because the teacher enters such environment with certain ideas. During his/her teaching practice under various impacts these ideas change and transform into concrete form under various impacts. The teacher recreates his/her idea of pedagogical reality, his/her potential future as a teacher and assures himself/herself about suitability of own defined objectives or modifies them according to what could happen in the future.

Models of pedagogical practice and mentoring, although conceptually different, aim to provide practical and psychological support to teachers. However, the importance attributed to this two aspects can be very different in the process of pedagogical practice, which is due to the difference in emphasis.

Gold (1996) defines the conceptual purpose of mentoring as "(1) for the purpose of instructional support, which includes assistance to the novice teacher regarding the knowledge, skills and strategies necessary to be successful in class and school, and (2) for psychological support to build self-efficacy, self-

confidence by building confidence in the efficiency of his/hers activities, promoting self-esteem, strengthening autonomy, and learning to cope with stress, largely stemming from this transition period."

A more detailed research analysis about practical support in mentoring shows that finding a response to question on what is the kind of help that future teachers really need is a rather controversial issue. Veenman (1984), in an extensive literature review on the incipient problems of teachers at the beginning of their teaching career, identified the most perceived needs of teachers for whom was not provided any help. For this purpose, he analyzed the interviews and questionnaires with teachers during the first year of teaching.

The summary of these studies concluded that novice teachers needed the most to help with discipline, motivation and captivation, individual approach respecting the diversity of children, evaluating children's work, relationships with parents, organizing teaching, and obtaining materials and tools.

Nevertheless, Feinman-Nemser (2003) concludes that these types of organizational and discipline problems often arise only because the teacher is unclear about purpose of the assignment or they chooses inappropriate tasks, or does not give to children sufficient instruction. Of course, this conclusion is formally correct, but isn't it because of too high expectations (e.g. how to encourage and motivate learning how to successfully manage a class using strategic knowledge), which often exceeds the capabilities of novice teachers? Beginning teachers simply do not have enough experience to anticipate the long-term implications of their educational decisions.

According to E.L. Deci, R.M. Ryan, 2014 (in Koláčková, 2016), the internal motivation is an innate tendency, which is manifested in the interest and curiosity of the individual. Based on F. Herzberg's philosophy, the most often in educational practice we divide the motivation on external - the intrinsic and on inner - the extrinsic motivation

Motivation of a person's behavior can be based either on internal motives, which is the inner necessity, or mostly on the external stimulus (incentives). In a broad sense, the motivation is according to V. Hrabal et al. (1989) "a summary of factors that stimulate, direct and maintain human behavior". It is a state of the art that consists of emotional and cognitive processes that stimulate (energize) and manage behaviors (give them direction).

For example, the student motivation model developed by Ames (1992) emphasizes that promoting a healthy student orientation is primarily determined by the long-term impact of three factors: the type of task assigned by the teacher, the way the role is assessed by the teacher, and student autonomy when practiced over a longer period of time.

Similarly, Weinstein and Mignano (1993) have pointed out that most of the classroom management problems could be avoided if teachers use appropriate prevention strategies based on their previous

pedagogical experience. However, the main obstacle for the realization of these ideas among novice teachers is their lack of strategic knowledge and the specific context of knowledge.

For this reason, novice and beginning teachers need appropriate advice and practical support in applying these principles together with the acquisition of the necessary specific skills, experience and sensitivity to issues of motivation and leadership.

As a result, good counselors or mentors must be aware that developing student motivation and classroom behavior is a long-term pedagogical issue. He or she must be able to explain to beginner teachers the importance of strategic decision-making on aspects of educational design and implementation, be able to keep track of long-term and short-term decisions of their "protégés" and propose corrections if needed.

Psychological support for novice and beginning teachers is mostly provided individually, but it can be also for group when the mentor organizes regular meetings with his/her protégés.

Gold (1996), based on the concept of various authors, summed up that psychological support "... was described as emotional support, positive context, targeted empathy, empathic listening ability, and determination of psychological need. In this context, psychological support includes a range of skills and strategies, including building trust, strengthening positive self-confidence, developing a sense of efficiency, empowering self-efficacy, learning to cope with stress, and psychological assistance and help." So, if practical support is mainly focused on informing and consulting the teacher's practices, psychological support has primarily a therapeutic purpose. In some cases, well-timed psychological support for novice teachers in their field experiences can play a much greater role in their professional growth than practical help.

At the same time, as Feinman-Nemser (2003) pointed out, sometimes practical help to a novice teacher in dealing with the situation in his or her classroom could be more effective than simply soothing a novice teacher in a difficult situation.

The dilemma, which of these two types of support has more effect, is similar to looking for the answer to which of these two factors - emotion or cognition - has a major impact on human behavior and which one is secondary. It is clear that the optimal ratio of practical help and psychological support depends primarily on the specific situation and the individual characteristics of children. In the longer term, this ratio is rather given by the (adopted) teacher education strategy.

Methods

As we have already presented in our theoretical background, we rely on interpretative research paradigm. We are convinced that every human experience is socially organized from the structural point of view, which excludes the possibility of the un-interpreted mental content of ones statements or internal

schemes. The presented knowledge is therefore not objective, but subjectively designed and based on such an agreement, transfer and construction of the researched reality between the researcher and the research participants. To our understanding and conceptualization contributed with great deal the social constructivism and discourse psychology, which gave us the opportunity to grasp research problems from a new perspective, based on the acceptance of subjectivity as a phenomenon.

Thus, the emphasis is shifting from the facts as such and objective reality (but is there anything like that at all?) towards the significance of the mentioned facts, to the subjective importance of reality in the context of a unique human life. In our everyday life, our reality is shaped largely by social interactions, that is, through the transmission of information. From the development point of view, this transmission is clearly apparent, as it is described and evidenced by a number of sociolinguistic studies that confirm, for example, the influence of the parental communication style on the way (process) of recovering/remembrance of memories (Reese, 2002).

What is interesting to us is the fact that this process helps to create identity in the network of social relations.

In order to achieve the set out goals, we have chosen the path of the a posteriori practice based on the obtained data.

As we have already said, from an epistemological point of view our approach is based on a belief in a socially created reality and recognizes the custom values necessity and opinions in the researched phenomena interpretation. We therefore applied a qualitative methodology, the main benefit of which is that it doesn't try to "obtrude" participants with completed categories, but instead try to find out how the participants construct certain themes themselves. The researcher is therefore the interpreter of social behavior of others.

The advantages of this type of research are, in particular, providing great insight into the explored subject since we explore the phenomena in their natural environment directly on the ground. The result is then detailed data.

The qualitative analysis of the data is mainly about:

- data in the form of records, mostly texts (diaries, transcripts, interviews, notes),
- contextualizing data and searching for generic formulas,
- encoding data and creating meaningful categories,
- searching for an explanation, creating an analytical story,
- creating hypotheses and theories.

The disadvantage of qualitatively oriented research, according to Hendl (2008) is mostly (apart of time consuming data collection and analysis) the impossibility of generalizing the obtained results and the

problematic testing of assumptions and theories. There is also the risk of making a possible distortion of data by researcher and his preferences.

There are several types of evaluation and processing of qualitative research data, we, however, have decided to use the categorial analysis of selected formal life line features and the narrative analysis method.

In qualitative method is the assessment of transcripts based on the assumption that the group is a "miniature thinker society" (Farr in Plichtová, 2000) and, within its dynamics, we can discover the deeper meaning or themes that are relevant to this society. Of course, we are fully aware and expect that there is a difference in the scientific and common language usage, which can also acquire different meanings in common use compared to the original scientific definition (Plichtová, 2000). However, we still believe that, ultimately, such a creative and flexible (qualitative) exploration of the dynamics and the multiple meaning levels of mutual relations functioning between teachers can bring much deeper results.

For the life curve method data processing we use narrative analysis. Narrative analysis method is one with the deepest roots and tradition, very simply speaking, it is something what we call oral tradition in our culture. Čermák (2003), our inspiration and one of our sources when it comes to the life curve method, in his article about narrative analysis refers to authors such as Propp (Russian literature, folklorist, scientist), Bachtin (Russian philosopher), Freyer (German sociologist), and points out that the life story is a construct that cannot be fully disclosed in research. It cannot even be considered as a stable structure system, simply because we can change our views on individual experienced events in the course of our lives as well as changes our perspective and overall horizon.

The life curve, respectively the life line[1] is a graphical expression of a life story. The life story is a product of narrative processing of autobiographical events of a particular person or several persons. Its purpose is to organize autobiographical events in a coherent way, to logically connect facts and at the same time based on evaluation and interpretation to create their meaning in the overall context of life. The basis of life story is thus an autobiographical memory that we can generally define as a memory of individually experienced life events. According to the authors Schroots and van Dijkum (2004) the autobiographical memory can be divided into retrospective memory, whose function is to invoke memories or past experience in the present; and prospective memory, whose role is to preserve plans, expectations and anticipation of the future (2002).

The narration as an analysis is used mainly because of our aim to understand certain social and cultural phenomena in a meaningfull context. Our research, however, does not consider scheme themes formulated by cognitive psychology and its traditional memory conception. We build on a relatively new

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[1] In this paper the term life curve is equivalent to the term life line, therefore in the following text we will use both terms, while we consider both terms to have equal meaning

theoretical approach of narrative perspective of an autobiographical memory. This approach has its foundations in the French social psychology from the beginning of the 20th century. The narration was presented as a cause of the social nature of human memory, as a system responsible for the so-called collective memory[2].

The basic characteristic of an autobiographical memory is a direct link to the self-concept (ego) and therefore, autobiographical memories are always to a certain degree a construction of reality or the past. In everyday life autobiographical memories emerge to the large extent in social interactions, i.e. through their sharing. The process of sharing autobiographical memories facilitates creation of one's own identity in the network of social relations (Reese, 2002), which broadens a reference frame from the sphere of intra-individual system to the area of interpersonal and sociocultural context.

The narrative approach thus presents a phenomenological assumption of autobiographical memory, creation of which occurs in the broader sociocultural context. We therefore work with a paradigm of life story that is closest to the version of Bruner (1991), who specifies a story as a conventional, culturally-transferred form, by means of which we organize our experience and memories.

Life story provides a comprehensive and complex source of research data, which we can analyse from a structural point of view in terms of form and content. Nowadays we witness an increase in studies that elaborate in detail on formal aspects of life stories, for instance we can mention a research by Čermák (2004). Čermák understood a life story in relation to the life line (curve) drawing technique. Based on a holistic-formal and holistic-content analysis he identified specific life story types which as a whole matched a certain shape of life line.

However, our intention was not to assess the variability of formal features of life line drawing, but rather an initiation of telling the life story, with our primary focus on the professional life of a teacher and identification of presence of significant moments. The line technique allows participants to include individual critical or otherwise important events in the life and time context and facilitates structuring and evoking of memories.

Realization of a life curve as a part of our research was conducted in the spring of 2014 and took place in the environment of kindergartens, in 7 cases in the headmaster's office, in two cases in the staff room (meeting room) of a kindergarten and in one case in the home environment of the participant. This method was quite time-consuming. Participants were asked to draw a line that expresses their life. They were then instructed to mark on the life curve a point illustrating the presence.

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[2] The so-called collective memory according to Maurice Halbwachs; a cause of this phenomenon is the fact that social groups actively form and create their culture and social life by interpretation and sharing of stories, so the core of social life is firmly bound and interconnected with stories
https://www.sfu.ca/cmns/courses/2012/487/1-Extra%20Readings/HalbwachsOnCollective%20Memory.pdf

Another task for them was to try to evoke those life events which they consider to be critical moments, in a certain way relevant and directive from the perspective of their professional life and mark them on the life line. The original intention was to allow the participants to work independently on their life line and subsequently ask them to retell their life on a voice recorder according to the markings. Narrative interview had commenced basically already at drawing of individual events and continued subsequently after their completion. Supplementary questions were thematically focused on the following areas: public figures, own conception of professional development, critical events and identity of the teacher. Conversation time varied between 45 minutes and 2 hours.

The data set consisted of 10 drawings of life lines and 9 audio recordings. In one case a participant rejected to tell his/her life story on a voice recorder. Although we analysed the drawing of life line also based on some of its formal characteristics, our priority was to process data and information from narrative speaking of respondents.

Formal characteristics of a life curve are identified by a categorial analysis method. In this procedure we start with identification of all events and characteristics that can be observed on the life curve. All characteristics, such as shape, segmentation, number and distribution of marked events are conceptually indicated.

Within these categories it is possible to create also subcategories associating individual drawings of life lines according to the presence or non-presence of a certain characteristic. However, we opted for only a basic categorization of obtained data from formal characteristics of a life line[3] and the only subject that we addressed additionally was the ratio of retrospective and prospective part of the curve in terms of number of events. Our research objective was an elaboration of statements of participants instead of formal characteristics of a life line, while in processing the data we followed a narrative analysis method.

Results

As we mentioned earlier, although originally the technique of life line drawing was developed as a projective technique[4], it has no diagnostic function in our research nor is it evaluated by a projective method. We understand the life curve drawing primarily as a graphical representation of an autobiographical memory and although we analysed life line drawing also according to some of its formal characteristics, our priority was to process data and information from a narrative speaking of respondents. Our research objective was an elaboration of statements of respondents, while in the processing of data we followed a categorization of narrative construction, according to Chrz (2004).

Formal characteristics of life curve are identified using a categorial analysis method. Within the categorial analysis we assessed a total number of events (tab. 1), a location of the first memory related to the teacher

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[3] Number and distribution of marked events in relation to retrospective and prospective sections of life line
[4] Říčan, Ženatý, 1988, its author being Jiří Tyl (1985), who described it first in his dissertation thesis.

or educational system and a distribution ratio of events in retrospective and prospective sections of the line (tab. 2).

Table 1

Number of recorded events on life curves. Csandová (2015)

	Participants									
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
Number of events	24	25	23	26	17	24	20	13	10	29

Table 2

Ratio of reported events in the retrospective and prospective section of a line Csandová (2015)

	Participants									
Ratio of events	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
Retrospective section	20	23	20	25	14	23	15	12	7	27
Prospective section	3	2	3	1	3	1	5	1	3	2

The conception of the future is not present in all obtained drawings. Results of marked planned events in terms of evaluation of the ratio are not based only on the events marked on the line, but also on the basis of data from narrative talking above the life line.

The prospective section of a life curve is the last evaluated characteristic. We found that 70 % of participants managed to capture the future course of life. Analysis of the prospective line nature revealed an occurrence of planned events, in a total of five cases.

Narrative research is primarily a process of researcher's interpretation of participants' interpretations[5]. Chrz (2004) attempted to describe 7 basic categories of narrative reconstruction. Its categories contain following lines that are not structured based on the importance or following sequence. All of them are simply necessary to construct a narrative analytical story. They are life topics, behaviour and its grounds

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[5] Miovský uses an interesting word phrase ″prevyprávění vyprávění″ – retelling of the telling, p.244

(substantiation of performance), plots and configurations, values and beliefs, ideas of self and others, reflection and perspective, discursive context.

In life topics it aimed to express what the matter here is. In addition to our line of a researcher, participants of course followed in their narration a thread of what they wanted in life and how it materialized, or materializes. We partially reflected also their perspective, but we adhered to our research topic in the process.

In substantiation of performance and behaviour in behavioural concept of causes we do not think in terms of what probably caused our behaviour, but we rather rationalize and explain.

A method of narration and analysis is performed through substantiation of a story, construction of a story context and therefore in our analytical story we follow all plots related to the target scope of understanding and affect the storyline.In the category values and beliefs it concerns that each action is consciously or unconsciously affected by our system of values and norms, therefore they need to be reflected.

An idea of self and others, or perspective, means a viewing angle, or from what perspective we look at individual events.

Perspective of the researcher is a little different from the perspective of participants, because the researcher had still in mind the objective of this part of research – a retrospective look on the past of the teacher, on the beginning of his career, on his mentor (if applicable) or other models and impact, which he/she had and further possible factors that contributed to the creation of his/her expert teacher identity. Participants expressed various degrees of reflection and different level of understanding of experience from this perspective, as it concerned their life, they shifted towards a more global sharing, therefore the researcher was allowed to take a leading role and apply his/her viewpoint and perspective.

Figure 1

*Participant no 4, Life line.* Csandová (2015)
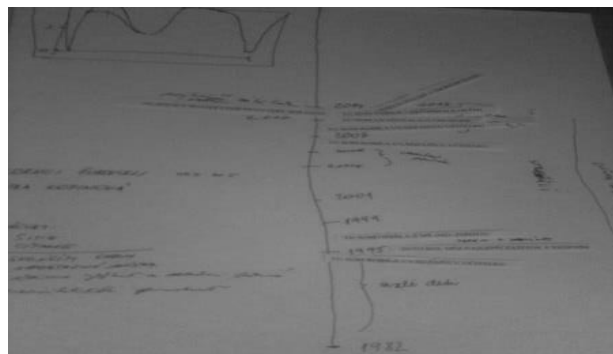
Discursive context of our story is clear. The narrative construction we will present in the following text is an experience arising from interaction of narrations of participants and a researcher and therefore, definitely is of a discursive nature.

We assumed a construction as a narration of one story, as if it was a single person of a presenting teacher and thus we categorize and generalize experience and narrations of 10 presenting teachers – experts into one story. However, for each relevant statement we attempted to state in what ratio the provided fact is true – in relation to other participants, within our research sample. We were interested in the issue of models, also their experience with the presenting teacher and eventual differences in what happened during the process of their presentation and present presentation system. We also searched for parallels (rather unconsciously) with Švaříčka's explorer interpretation related to the occurrence of critical events and their impact on identity of the teacher-expert.

Inner motivation of the teacher - expert (according to our research sample) reaches far into his/her past. Either an observation of a mother – teacher at work in kindergarten or elementary school, which was at the same time also the first model (5 out of 10) or a member of immediate family that includes at least two more teachers (reported by 8 out of ten). The desire to be a teacher is localized in early childhood, either in preschool or early school age. Where the teacher was not present in the family (2 cases) there was a strong teacher model in primary school.

Figure 2

Participant no 6, Life line. Csandová (2015)
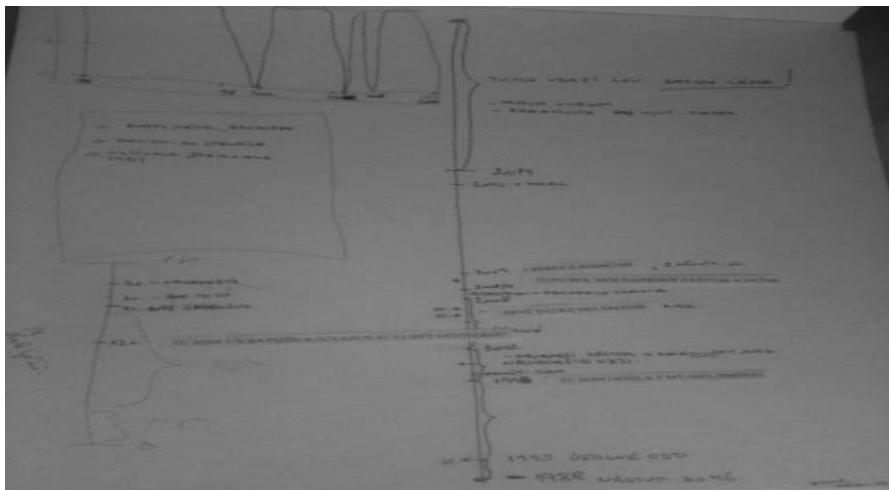
Although it appears that a belief that the teacher profession is the right and only profession was in our expert forever, more was crystalized and consolidated by the first experience in the profession. Our

teacher found already during the training practice at the secondary pedagogical school (except for 1 participant, who had a frustrating and negative experience with a teacher in the kindergarten – not with a training pedagogue from the secondary school) that he/she thrives at work with children, while it appears that he/she has certain natural talent and a feedback from children, either in the form of warm reception, drawings as presents, or a successful management of a particular task, fills him/her with great inner happiness and satisfaction. After the completion of the secondary pedagogical school in the life of our teacher follows a problematic period in which he/she struggles with practical issues related to moving and seeking a job opportunity (moving and problems associated with an adaptation to a new environment are reported by all participants, while the problem of seeking a job by only 2). Here comes the induction phase, but there is nobody to lead our teacher, he/she is thrown straight into the water and no problem is mentioned with it, to the contrary he/she looks back at this stage of life with a smile and pleasant nostalgia (except for the participant no. 10, who was assigned a "very unfavourable" induction teacher).

A large part of a retrospective narration of our teacher from this period represent memories of high numbers of children in classes, of two "jobs" (main educational activities in the range up to 40 minutes) daily, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, of taking the lunch from canteen and daily folding and unfolding beds for afternoon rest of children. With a broad smile they talk about a "terror" in open inspection classes, where "you had 30 teachers, 3 inspectors and a headmaster sitting, all were packed in one classroom together with forty kids and then they all criticized you, everybody was writing down notes and it was brutal, not like what we have now, Evička"

Despite intensifying glamorization of circumstances (with each question a number of colleagues and children at open classes was rising) we noticed a hidden nostalgia and our "suspicion" was confirmed after the statement "at that time we had everything perfected and clear, no chaos, one methodology, one procedure and we went on full gas". The teacher talks about methodological meetings where teachers exchanged not only recipes for cakes, but also demonstrations of work with children, this time in a smaller and representative number of children for illustration purposes. A kindergarten was always chosen as hosting and these had been alternating. "We were a team, we were meeting after work, we addressed everything together, this does not happen today anymore, everyone is on his own and we do not learn anything at methodological meetings, just a lot of foreign words, no practical demonstrations, just dry recitation and job done". Our teacher has a lot of most beautiful memories and is not able to choose only one, he/she recalls common schools in nature, success with a problematic child, performances with children on various occasions and subsequent acknowledgement of parents, who appreciated their work, simple common moments with children in the yard without instructed activities, emotional moments, when "kids" (adolescents or adults) came after many years back to the kindergarten to say thanks, trust of parents and statement "Dear Mrs. Headmaster, I beg you to take my son to your class, I also was in your

class and you were the best for me and I want the right guidance for my son as well." However, our teacher – expert emphasizes the reciprocity from children the most – "many times I give them just a little and they return a hundred times more back to me with their love, this is why it is worthwhile to be here despite ridiculously low pay, but I would not change". Nevertheless, there were times of thinking of leaving the educational system (each participant, very seriously one half and 1 actually left educational system for a period of 1 year) and moments, when the teacher felt lost most often due to problems in a team (8 participants) or stress from implementation of reforms in the period, when competence over kindergartens was shifted from school authorities to municipalities and then to the network of schools (1 participant).

Figure 3

Participant no 8, Life line. Csandová (2015)
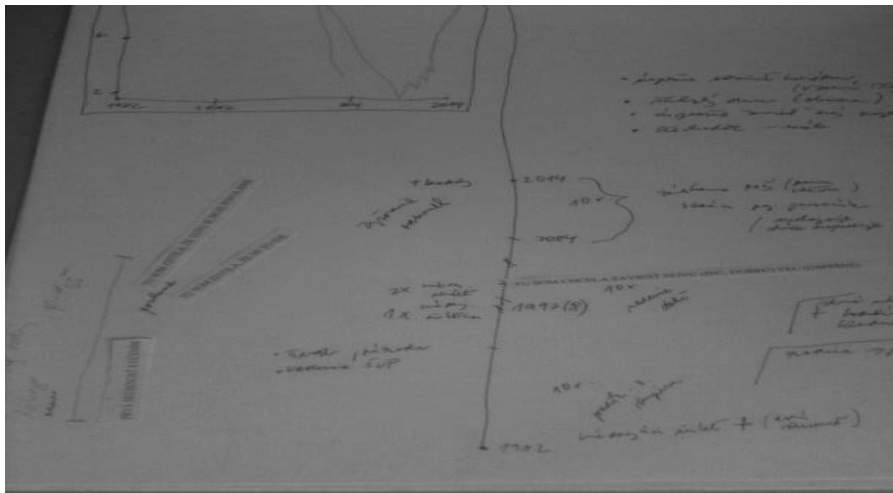
In assessment of how motherhood has affected work of the teacher - expert he/she rejects an idea that an experience with own children helps to move forward professionally (except for one respondent, who has a daughter suffering from attention and learning disorders and epilepsy, who states that it has helped her significantly in acceptance and patience and receipt of other children "as they are"). Our teacher recalls failures in implementation of new ideas with resentment, as they are associated with the period of rejection by colleagues, but he/she took a lesson from it in a sense that interpretation and support matter really much. To the contrary he/she gladly recalls an experience when in other period a new and good thing was put through and implemented. He/she has a lot of negative experience with colleagues (all participants), but good moments outweigh it. He/she mentions one perfect and popular colleague (each participant), but at the same time states that basically all are fine in their own way, even those annoying. Our teacher was an induction teacher at least twice (each participant, four were unable to remember how many times even after a long think, they stated just many times) and for the last time he was an induction teacher (each participant) it was in this year (2014).

He/she looks into the future with optimism, he/she has many hobbies and plans to assert in local politics (3 participants) and devote himself/herself to family and hobbies (each participant).

Discussion

Critical moments are certainly largely concentrated in the early period of the teaching career, but based on participants' statements, despite having to struggle with many stressful situations in the beginning of their induction, these were not a ground for resignation, but to the contrary they have strengthened and motivated them internally. Truly profession-threatening critical moments emerged as a gradual accumulation of misunderstandings and problems in the team once the teachers were induced. Yet the process of teacher induction itself and related problems in the end were not affected by a personal relationship and emotional support of colleagues, opinions of kindergarten directors and legislation, but rather by a personal engagement of a beginning teacher, strong inner motivation and his/her readiness to adopt a new identity or a role. The risk is therefore an extinction of this inner motivation, or its weakening, caused often by small, non-serious conflicts in a team, but which are not addressed and then as a small snowball transform into an avalanche, potentially threatening a professional career of the teacher and his/her inner motivation. Anyway, each teacher (also those that have left a profession of kindergarten headmaster for a while) has returned back to the teaching profession after a short time, as it fulfilled and enriched them internally and because they could not find joy in any other profession.

In connection with the often mentioned "shock of reality", experienced by the teachers, also the issue of financial compensation has emerged. Money is certainly an important factor in teachers' lives. Recently we may witness a great dissatisfaction of teachers also by means of strikes and media reports, as they feel inadequate financial compensation. However, teaching in the kindergarten is not a profession with great financial compensation and a beginning teacher in kindergarten is well aware of how much he/she will earn, as it is determined by official tables. Nevertheless, the teacher can find himself/herself in a situation, where the financial compensation will decide on his/her further advancement or non-advancement. Our results confirm the explorer interpretation of "shock of reality", i.e. that the reason is a non-identification of an individual with the professional identity of a teacher. These findings match results of the Czech study by Švaříček (2011) on critical events in creation of the professional identity of a teacher. We also noticed that the focus of attention put more on the method and result of the teacher's work, than on his identity and role, acts ultimately depressing. In our opinion, in the early period of teaching "career" the teacher's self-conception, metacognition and his/her professional competence are fundamental factors determining the overall success. Focus on performance and result, preferred nowadays by the school from its teachers, leads often only to their frustration. We are convinced that perhaps it would be enough to more believe in self-control of each person that does not lead to an escalation of problems, but rather to the performance of common objectives (Zelinová, 2011).

Conclusions

The presented research paper examined the concepts and interpretations of experience of ten teachers from the selected kindergartens. Results of the research exploration revealed that concepts developed by teachers are a kind of intersection created on the basis of comparison of what is expected from them and what is presented in the theory and between what they experience in real life. We classified identified inconsistencies according to attributes.

Kindergarten teachers represent a compact and relatively strongly integrated social community characteristic of a common communication code, persisting collective memory, propensity to traditionalism and distrust of changes, which is, however, not based on their passivity or incompetence, but rather originates in a general scepticism from political and social situation and primarily upon a sequence of school reforms, which often fail to achieve intended effect. Nostalgia of experts is not caused by a lack of prospective perspective on their career, but by a fact that mentoring, or its essence constructed by participants of our research as a mutual assistance and guidance, was very actively performed in past periods through methodological and social meetings of kindergartens on a district, town or even regional level. Nowadays, it has been replaced by a more seminary, lecture activity without real connection of kindergartens and sharing of experience. It is exactly the above mentioned sharing of experience, together with a practical assistance and a sense of fellowship what beginning teachers expect from their mentors and vice versa. However, the identity of a teacher and its formation is not influenced by a presence of a model, although its absence may be felt by the teacher very intensely. Teacher's identity is more a result of inner motivation of the particular individuality that has deeper foundations and extends further that just to the initial phase of the teacher's professional life and that is tested by external factors, but not formed by them.

We consider the knowledge on the concept and social representations of teachers regarding the issue of critical moments, which we obtained by the means of a qualitative research, beneficial in particular in terms of understanding of an interpretative framework of teachers and a possibility to propose recommendations for further research. The purpose of the presented paper should not be an intervention or prescription, but should provide a scientific reflection important for the development of the Slovak educational system in the period of ongoing significant transformations.

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LEARNING SITUATIONS DRAWN FROM PLAY: WHAT IMPACTS ON PRESCHOOLERS' MOTIVATION TO DO MATHEMATICAL TASKS?

Roxane Drainville & Thomas Rajotte

Abstract

According to recent studies, mathematic skills are one of the best predictors of future academic achievement and the interest and enjoyment of children in mathematics are positively related to mathematic skills. To investigate how to foster preschooler's enthusiasm for mathematics, we conducted a quasi-experimental research to verify whether the implementation of Learning Situations Drawn from Play (LSDP), a pedagogical model that takes place in the make-believe play of children and that respects its logic (Marinova, 2014), has impacts on preschoolers' motivation to do mathematical tasks. The inferential analysis shows that LSDP had a significant impact on one observable manifestation of children motivation, it being the cognitive engagement. Furthermore, observations of LSDP during the experimentation show that many children have participated voluntarily into mathematical LSDP, whether initiated by the children themselves or their teacher. This research is relevant insofar as it experiences for the first time mathematical LSDP and contributes to the advancement of knowledge on pedagogical models that fosters the motivation of preschool children to perform mathematical tasks.

Key Words: Cognitive Engagement; Make-Believe Play; Preschool Education; School Motivation.

Introduction

According to recent studies (Aunio & Niemivirta, 2010, Watts, Duncan, Siegler & Davis-Kean, 2014), mathematic skills of preschool children are one of the best indicators of their future academic achievement. It is therefore essential to support children in the development of their mathematical thinking, but it is also important to encourage their interest and pleasure in this discipline since they are positively related to mathematic skills (Doctoroff, Fisher, Burrows & Edman, 2016). Several authors claim that make-believe play constitutes a favorable context for the development of mathematical thinking if the teacher seizes opportunities to support children's learning (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2010; Marinova, Biron & Drainville, 2016; Van Oers, 1996). Furthermore, from an early age, children spontaneously bring mathematics into their play and play with mathematics (Ginsburg, 2006). Ginsburg (2006) emphasizes the importance of preserving this current and genuine interest of children in this discipline. But how to foster their enthusiasm for mathematics?

We investigated this question and carried out a quasi-experimental research to verify whether the implementation of Learning Situations Drawn from Play (LSDP) (Marinova, 2014) has impacts on the motivation of preschool children to perform mathematical tasks. In this article, we first present the theoretical framework on which we have based our hypothesis that LSDP are a pedagogical model that fosters the motivation of preschool children to perform mathematical tasks. Then, we explain how we measured the impact of LSDP on children motivation. Finally, we describe how the implementation of LSDP took place in two preschool classes, with mainly five year old children who participated in this research and we give some examples of LSDP that have been observed during the experimentation.

Learning Situations Drawn from Play

Learning Situations Drawn from Play (LSDP) are based on the perspective that children are learning to play and not playing to learn (Marinova, 2014). This does not mean that children do not learn when they are playing: in make-believe play, opportunities to learn arise spontaneously through the sharing of knowledge between the players and through teacher's interventions. What is called LSDP are these "spontaneous activities of the children or indirectly proposed by the teacher that, while pursuing a pedagogical objective, take place in play and respect its logic" (Marinova, 2014, p. 111). Marinova (2014) states that, like the play, the LSDP:

- take the form of an imaginary situation (the teacher must play: enter the imaginary world and play a role);
- grant the child "the right to participate in the activity at will, to perform or not a task, and to stop the activity when it is no longer of interest to him" (p. 112);

- impose rules (predetermined by the play or invented by players) that must be respected, otherwise a player could be rejected from the play by the other players;
- respect the frivolous nature of the activity, meaning that children are exempted from success at all costs, since "failures are " to pretend " [...] so they do not affect the child's self-esteem. Successes, on the other hand, are real and bring to children joy and pride of discovery "(p. 113);
- remain uncertain, unpredictable (the teacher must therefore have a flexible planning to adapt to the children's play scenario).

Motivation in School Context

According to Viau (2003), motivation is "a dynamic state that has its origins in a student's perceptions of himself/herself and his/her environment and that prompts the student to choose, engage and persevere in its accomplishment in order to attain a goal "(p. 32). He also states that the motivation is determined by (1) the value the child places on the activity, (2) his feelings of competence in the activity, and (3) his control over the activity. Thus, based on the Viau model (2003), we believe that children will be motivated to perform mathematical tasks in LSDP that arise through their characters. First, the value given to this task will be positive since learning will aim to enrich their play and bring it further. Secondly, the child's feeling of competence in the task will be protected by the fact that, in the play, "failures can be attributed to the characters they play, without their appropriation" (Marinova, 2016, p. 74). Thus, they feel free to make trials and errors without negatively affecting their self-esteem. Finally, the children control the play: they choose what they play at and how they play it. Even when the teacher-player proposes ideas to lead players into mathematical LSDP, each child is free to participate or not. These links between motivation and LSDP are illustrated in the Table 1.

Table 1 Links between motivation and LSDP

Determinants of School Motivation	Learning Situations Drawn from Play
Value the child places on the activity $\longrightarrow$	Learning will aim to enrich child's play
Child's feelings of competence in the activity $\longrightarrow$	Failures are "to pretend"
Child's control over the activity $\longrightarrow$	Freedom to play or not, to choose what and how to play

Pretest and Posttest

With an availability sampling (Voyer, Valois & Rémillard, 2000), we recruited five and six year old preschoolers from two classes (n=35) to participate in the experimental group and from two other classes (n=31) to participate in the non-equivalent control group. These children participated in a pretest and a posttest that aimed at measuring their motivation to perform a mathematical task before and after the implementation of LSDP in the experimental group. According to Viau (2003), some observable manifestations (indicators) allow to measure the child's motivation: the choice to undertake an activity, perseverance, cognitive commitment to accomplish it and performance. Thus, during the testing, children were ask to accomplish a mathematical task (count fruits drawn on a picture and bring them to the evaluator/ being ask by the evaluator to bring more, less or the same quantity of fruits than...). They had the possibility to stop it at any time. Viau's observable manifestations were compiled on a Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" (e.g. the child avoids the task, the child becomes discouraged when he encounters a difficulty, the child develops strategies to accomplish the task).

Data collected from each group were then compared to verify whether the implementation of LSDP has impacts on observable manifestation of preschool children's motivation to perform mathematical tasks. Inferential statistical analysis were conducted (*Student t test for independent samples*) and showed that, on average, the cognitive engagement during the mathematical task of children in the experimental group was significantly higher (p<0.05) than the cognitive engagement of the control group (T (1,63) = 2.105; *p*=0,039). There were no significant differences between the two groups for the choice to do the activity, the child's perseverance and performance.

Experimentation

Two preschool teachers and children of their classes (n=35) experimented LSDP. To encourage the emergence of mathematical LSDP, a restaurant play area was set up in each classroom. Playful material that can lead children to do mathematical tasks were added: wooden marbles of various shapes and colors, pizza with removable ingredients, cups and measuring spoons, illustrated recipes, menus, etc. The restaurant play was chosen since it offers several scenarios in which children can be led to count, to represent a number, to compare collections of objects, to make an operation or to create a regularity.

In this study, we observed five periods of play and compiled every time a child was seen performing mathematical tasks into restaurant play with or without his teacher intervention. In sum, we saw: 42 times a child counting by himself and 43 times with teacher intervention, 18 times representing a number by

himself and 8 times with teacher intervention, 6 times comparing collections of objects by himself and 17 times with teacher intervention, 8 times making an operation by himself and 13 times with teacher intervention, 21 times creating a regularity by himself and 9 times with teacher intervention. The next section of this article illustrates some examples of LSDP observed during the experimentation.

Examples of Learning Situations Drawn from Play Observed

LSDP 1 - Counting:

Some children had the idea to build an amusement park next to the dining room of the restaurant. The teacher pretended to be their mother. She asked Karen and Ulysses, who played the servers, to come with her to take the orders of her children. The teacher then asked the children in the park to raise their hands if they wanted popcorn. The waiters counted their hands up. They then prepared the right amount of popcorn bowls and brought them to the children. This LSDP was played three times during this period of play since the teacher returned later with the waiters to ask the children if they wanted fruits and, later still, pizza.

LSDP 2 - Representing a number:

The teacher played the role of the restaurant's receptionist. She took the phone and pretended to receive an order for delivery. She noted the order on a paper and brought it to the cooks. Thereafter, three children imitated the teacher: they talked on the phone and wrote down numbers and drawings on a paper to illustrate the order before bringing it to the cooks.

LSDP 3- Comparing collections:

The teacher played a client and asked Mylène (waitress): "I would like to eat a mushroom, a lot of slices of pepperoni and more green peppers. Mylene came back and served her two mushrooms and two slices of pepperoni. The teacher told her politely that the order was inaccurate (she repeated what she wanted to eat). The girl went back to the kitchen and brought this time a mushroom, a lot of slices of pepperoni and some green peppers. The teacher told the waitress that she needed to eat more green vegetables than pepperoni to be healthy. Mylène then fetched peppers and added them. The teacher stacked the slices of pepperoni and asked the children around her (Mylène and a boy sitting at her table, Jacob) if they could check the accuracy of the order. The children counted the peppers and the slices of pepperoni, then Jacob had the idea to make a pile with the green peppers and to place it next to the stack of pepperoni made by the teacher. Thus, they used two strategies for comparing the collections in this LSDP.

LSDP 4 – Making mathematical operations:

The teacher played a client and four children accompanied her to eat at the restaurant. She ordered a bowl of noodles (the teacher had brought pasta boxes in the classroom). Florence, a waitress, brought her a big bowl containing several types of noodles (macaroni, farfalle, rotini and penne) as well as a plate for each customer. The teacher then offered the children to share the noodles. They developed a variety of strategies: to distribute a handful to each customer, to count the noodles in the plates and to use a container to measure portions.

LSDP 5 - Creating a regularity:

Playing a client, the teacher ordered a skewer of bananas and strawberries. Lili-Rose then brought her a skewer on which the marbles were placed: red, yellow, red, yellow, etc. Kevin, sitting close by, took up the idea of the teacher and ordered a skewer of fruits. Lili-Rose brought him a skewer with two purple marbles, two green marbles, two blue marbles and two red marbles.

Conclusions

This research has allowed us to see that Learning Situation Drawn from Play (LSDP) had a significant impact on one observable manifestation of children motivation, it being the cognitive engagement. We think that this finding can be linked to Bruner's play paradox (1983) according to which ""in the play, the behavior is dissociated from (and protected against) its normal sequelae" (p. 224). Brougère (1997) explains that the consequences are minimized in a play because their effects disappear when the play ceases. According to Marinova (2016), it is this paradox that encourages children to take risks and make trials without fearing that their self-esteem might be affected. In this research, we noticed that players involved in LSDP did not hesitate to explore different mathematical strategies and that some were ready to try again in case of "errors", without getting discouraged. We then hypothesize that children in experimental group developed strategies to perform mathematical tasks during LSDP and reinvested them into mathematical tasks in a different context (in the posttest).

Furthermore, observations of LSDP during the experimentation showed that many children have participated voluntarily into mathematical LSDP, whether initiated by the children themselves or their teacher. This finding confirms that play has a positive impact on the motivation to do mathematical tasks of some preschool children. However, since LSDP should not be imposed, some children in the experimental group preferred to play something different than a restaurant play which implies a variety of mathematical tasks (in this research, we did not observe whether they engaged in mathematical tasks in their other activities). That's why we stress the importance for teachers in adapting LSDP to the needs

and interests of each child. As Marinova (2014) explains, teacher must observe children playing "to identify their current interests and their questions, and to use them as a basis for planning LSDP" (p. 114).

In conclusion, this research is relevant insofar as it experiences for the first time mathematical LSDP and contributes to the advancement of knowledge on pedagogical models that fosters the motivation of preschool children to perform mathematical tasks. We think that it would be interesting to deepen this research by experimenting LSDP during a longer period and with a larger sample of children to verify if LSDP could have a positive impact on more than one observable manifestation of children motivation to perform mathematical tasks. Another interesting avenue for research would be to investigate the correlation between preschooler's participation into LSDP and their mathematical performances in later years at the elementary school level.

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CULTURAL WELLBEING AND RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Sherridan Emery

Abstract

Scholars argue that ecological worldviews are important for young children's emerging understandings of themselves as part of the diversity of life inhabiting the Earth (Inoue, 2014), and for supporting relationships that are integral to cultural wellbeing. Early childhood educators are well placed to support cultural wellbeing within their classroom communities where diversity is valued and regarded as enrichment for such practice.This paper presents preliminary findings from an exploratory study of cultural wellbeing in early childhood education in Tasmania, Australia in which interviews were conducted with educators. Two broad areas of diversity in education emerged as important contributors to cultural wellbeing: cultural diversity and biological diversity (biodiversity). Educators described cultural wellbeing as belonging and connectedness to people, places, and cultural worlds. Providing enriching opportunities to encounter and experience diversity was integral to educators' practices of cultivating cultural wellbeing. The research found that early childhood classroom communities can be fertile spaces for supporting cultural wellbeing through engaging young children in experiences which value diversity. While opportunities for supporting cultural wellbeing were evident across all social locations, educators' perceptions revealed that greater opportunities for such support were available in high socio-economic locations. The findings of the research are discussed in relation to Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital and habitus. Enabling and constraining factors for cultural wellbeing are explored, to encourage consideration of cultural wellbeing in other contexts. Ultimately this paper argues that enabling student encounters with diversity can support cultural wellbeing in and beyond classroom communities.

Key Words

Introduction

In *The culture of education,* Jerome Bruner (1996, p. ix) pondered: "given the revolutionary changes through which we are living", should schooling be dedicated to the ideal of "preparing students to cope with the changing world in which they will be living?" In the decades since Bruner penned these words, there has been a shift away from considering children simply as future citizens of the world to a more contemporary view of children as human 'beings and becomings' (Uprichard, 2008) and citizens living in the here and now (Christensen & Prout, 2002). The view of children as human 'beings and becomings' compels a reframing of Bruner's question. The changing world of the future that Bruner wrote of is the world of today (Bauman, 2013; Jeffrey & Mcdowell, 2004), leading to questions of how can early childhood education support and prepare students to cope with the changing world in which they live?

A contemporary sociology of childhood becoming increasingly accepted within education discourses in which children and young people are viewed "active in the construction of their own lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live" (James & Prout, 1990, p. 8). Children can be valued as cultural producers and beings, active in the production of culture, while also being produced by the cultural milieu and relations of power in which they are growing up. A view of children and young people as active participants in and contributors to culture is foundational to this study.

This paper is part of a research project investigating cultural wellbeing in classroom communities in the Australian state of Tasmania. This study is located within the field of student wellbeing research and adopts a human rights framing. After outlining the concept of wellbeing as it relates to children and its importance in education in this section, the concept of cultural wellbeing which is the specific topic of the study is introduced to consider its relevance in international early childhood education contexts.

Education is one of the 'key levers' available to governments for ensuring their commitments to children's rights are met (Redmond, 2009), and the main focal point for this study is schooling. As this research is conducted in the Australian context, this draws attention to the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians ('the Declaration')(Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), 2008). Signed almost a decade after the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)(UN General Assembly, 1989), the Melbourne Declaration (2008) employs some of the UNCRC's language

Two goals form the centrepiece of the Declaration:

1. Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence, and
2. All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens. (MCEETYA, 2008).

The Declaration asserts the role of education in building a nation that is "cohesive and culturally diverse, and that values Australia's Indigenous cultures as a key part of the nation's history, present and future" (p. 4). It further spells out the vital role that schools play "in promoting students' intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing", however there are silences surrounding the contribution of culture to the wellbeing of students (ibid, p. 4).

To add to this emerging area of international research, I sought to understand contributions of culture to the wellbeing of children and young people within the contexts of classroom communities in early childhood education and schooling. This article focuses on the period of early childhood education encompassed in the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) which is the Australian curriculum for children aged from birth to 8 years (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2009). In the Australian education system this includes the years up to grade 2 of schooling.

In respecting the Australian context of this research I acknowledge that the idea of cultural wellbeing as an aspect of Australian education policy and practice has been significantly advanced by ongoing and collective efforts of the Indigenous education community in Australia which has consistently called for holistic approaches to wellbeing to be prioritised in education (Cairney & Abbott, 2014). While this study does not focus on 'the culture' of any single national or ethnic group of people, but is a broader study of cultural wellbeing as a concept in the field of schooling, it draws upon a diverse array of literatures including research conducted in Aboriginal communities and by Aboriginal scholars. In Aboriginal research, cultural wellbeing has been discussed as being integral to a holistic idea of health and wellbeing as Garvey (2008) explains: "the social, emotional, spiritual and cultural wellbeing of the whole community is paramount and essential for the health and wellbeing of the individuals who comprise it, as is the bond between person and land" (p. 3). These ideas will be more fully explored in the review of literatures of wellbeing and culture in education to which I now turn.

Increasingly there are concerns that children and young people are not faring well (Eckersley, Wierenga & Wyn, 2006; McMurray & Clendon, 2015), despite progress made in children's development in recent decades particularly in many nations where poverty is prevalent (UNICEF, 2013). The World Health Organisation (WHO) encompasses wellbeing in its definition of health, indicating that health is "a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO, 1946/1996). Children's wellbeing is a topic of concern across many parts of the world, with UNICEF noting that there are differences in the nature of children's wellbeing matters in wealthier countries compared to countries where economic disadvantage is prevalent (UNICEF, 2013).

Wellbeing is often conceptualised in relation to Bronfenbrenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of human development which brings into view the various layers of life surrounding children which are influential on their wellbeing including parents, families, schools, communities and societies more broadly.The ecological model places emphasis on interactions between children and their environments as being significant to learning, development and students' wellbeing. Further to the multi-layered *wellbeing inputs* that Bronfenbrenner's model depicts through the micro, meso and macro system levels, the range of *wellbeing impacts* experienced by young people is growing and has become part of the public discourse surrounding young people. Physical health, social functioning, feelings of happiness and satisfaction are indicators of wellbeing and are manifest in children's interactions with their environment (Mayr & Ulich, 1999). Forces within a child's family, community and society combine to shape wellbeing. Environmental, geographic, socio-economic and political influences are also significant (La Placa, McNaught, & Knight, 2013). These many factors are indicative of the complexity of wellbeing.

Wellbeing scholar Asher Ben-Arieh notes five major shifts in the field – "from survival to well-being, from negative to positive, from well becoming to well being, from traditional to new domains, and from adult reporting to child centred research" (Ben-Arieh, 2004 cited in Ben-Arieh & Goerge, 2006, p. 21). These shifts are reflective of the new sociology of childhood in which children and young people are acknowledged as both being and becoming (James & Prout,1997/2015). Culture can be considered as one of the new domains of wellbeing that research and policy is shifting towards. Statham and Chase (2010) note that cultural implications of wellbeing are not well understood and suggest that enhanced understandings of culture and its influences on wellbeing outcomes may improve theorising and operationalising childhood wellbeing.

Cultural wellbeing is a concept that is emerging across a range of disciplines including international development, health and management. While there is little evidence of theorised definitions and interpretations of cultural wellbeing, this literature review synthesises some common concepts of cultural wellbeing apparent in research conducted in several different nations and across the reference disciplines. I begin this review of the literature of cultural wellbeing with a brief outline of the ways that cultural wellbeing has been researched in a range of countries.

Initiatives in Italy and England provide insights into cultural dimensions of wellbeing as a concept increasingly being researched at the national level. A longitudinal population level study, the *Italian Culture and Wellbeing Project* (Grossi, Blessi, Sacco & Cerutti, 2011), is investigating the interaction between cultural participation and wellbeing in a multi-stage research project conducted over more than a decade. This Italian project adopts a particular interpretation of culture as participation in a range of cultural activities, including theatre performances, exhibitions, concerts, cinema attendance, museum visits, book

reading and sports practice. The research has reported tentative evidence of a positive association between cultural participation and self reported health and wellbeing. In more recent research based on comparative analysis between Italian cities, Blessi and colleagues (2016) have again reported positive wellbeing benefits resulting from cultural participation and suggest the possibility of a "culture/well-being positive feedback dynamic" (p. 216).

The idea of a culture/wellbeing positive dynamic is one that underpins an emerging trend in England of "Arts on Prescription" schemes (Bungay & Clift, 2010; Chatterjee et al., 2017). This has been particularly spurred by the highlighting of the importance of such schemes to national wellbeing in the policy report by the (UK) All Party Parliamentary Group on Wellbeing Economics (APPG/WE, 2017) and in the Culture White Paper (Department for Culture, Media & Sport, 2016). Noting that there is a "profound relationship between culture, health and wellbeing" (p. 13), the White Paper encourages fostering increased participation across the England's cultural sectors of the arts, museums and galleries, libraries, archives and heritage. Further, the 'cultural construction of wellbeing' has been explored by the Economic and Social Research Council group, Wellbeing in Developing Countries (WeD) through an ongoing program of comparative empirical research in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Peru and Thailand (Camfield, Crivello, & Woodhead, 2009). In international development literature cultural wellbeing and its influences have been considered in national case studies in India and the Sudan (Rao & Walton, 2004).

While the research emanating from the aforementioned countries interprets the concept of cultural wellbeing largely in relation to participation in arts and cultural activities, within Australia, research exploring cultural wellbeing has had a prominent focus on the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Cultural wellbeing is particularly evident in indigenous health research, for example; in relation to Aboriginal child health (Priest, Mackean, Davis, Briggs, & Waters, 2012); indigenous health programs delivered in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (Day & Francisco, 2013); and in relation to the mental health of Aboriginal people (Swan and Raphael, 1995). Dockery's (2017) research with indigenous communities found that stronger cultural attachment and cultural identity is associated with improved participation and achievement in education. Dockery concluded that cultural determinants of wellbeing recognise strong connection to culture and cultural identity as protective factors for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Dockery, 2017).

In the next section I draw out common themes from this collection of international research and bring this together with findings from studies of cultural wellbeing in the reference disciplines of international development, health and management. This serves as an initial scoping exercise provides an overview of the research and literature landscape relating to cultural wellbeing and a basis from which this constructivist grounded theory study departs.

Cultural wellbeing themes from the literature

Three themes in particular were evident in this review of the reference literature: cultural wellbeing involved connections, relationships and a sense of belonging; participation in social and cultural practices; and finally, cultural wellbeing contributed to overall wellbeing.

Connections, relationships and belongin

Research in the reference disciplines of international development and Aboriginal health found that cultural wellbeing is discussed as a function of connections to people and community, and country and land.

In their research Rao and Walton (2004) used a 'cultural lens' to consider wellbeing in the field of international development. Emphasising the centrality of relationships among individuals within groups, among groups, and between ideas and perspectives" (Rao & Walton, 2004, p. 4), the authors view culture as being "concerned with identity, aspiration, symbolic exchange, coordination and structures and practices that serve relational ends" (ibid). They employ a cultural lens as a means of opening up questions of power, and considering how people employ cultural, social and symbolic resources to navigate within the social order. A focus on culture is necessary according to Rao and Walton (2004), "to confront the difficult questions of *what* is valued in terms of wellbeing, *who* does the valuing, and *why* economic and social factors interact with culture to unequally allocate access to a good life" (ibid). In positing these questions about the nexus between culture and wellbeing these authors focus attention on the power relations that are central to making meaning of culture (Hall, 1997).

Participation in social and cultural practices and symbolic exchange

Participation in social and cultural practices is integral to cultural wellbeing across an array of literature reviewed (Dockery, 2010, 2017; Grossi et al., 2011; Pattanaik, 1997; White & Pettit, 2004). Participation takes many forms, and aspects noted in relation to cultural wellbeing include democratic processes (White & Pettit, 2004), empowerment (Rao & Walton, 2004), and the "consumption and production of aesthetic and intellectual products" (Grossi et al., 2011; Pattanaik, 1997).

In Italy Grossi and colleagues studied the contributions of culture to wellbeing at the population level, using a particular interpretation of culture as participation in cultural activities including theatre performances, exhibitions, concerts, to cinema attendance, museum visits, book reading and practicing sport. Their research found that culture has a relevant role as a determinant of individual psychological wellbeing (Grossi et al., 2011).

Participation in social and cultural practices includes processes of identity formation and symbolic exchange. The formation of cultural identity is linked to wellbeing (Siraj-Blatchford & Clarke, 2000; Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, 2008). Strengthening cultural identity has been indicated as a protective factor for Aboriginal people (Zubrick et al., 2010), and studies have found that positive cultural identity develops through community cultural development, particularly through sharing stories and participation in the arts (Mills & Brown, 2004; VicHealth, 2013). Making and communicating meaning through such cultural activities are symbolic practices of exchange according to Hall (1997), which can support processes of identity formation through which children can come to appreciate themselves and others. Play is a participatory cultural practice through which children express and make meaning of their experiences (Marsh, 2004).

The emphasis on participation alludes to the innate potential for children to be active agents in the construction of cultural wellbeing, however Rao and Walton (2004) also note the problem of tokenistic approaches to participation. This is particularly relevant in the area of children's participation, a topic of extensive research by Hart (2013) whose 'ladder of participation' depicts the potential for children to be disempowered through token participation.

Links between cultural wellbeing and overall wellbeing

Understandings that culture (variously interpreted) contributes to the overall wellbeing of people have been advanced recently through the concept of 'the cultural determinants of health and wellbeing'. Indigenous scholar, Professor Ngaire Brown (2014) argues the cultural determinants of health "originate from and promote a strength based perspective, acknowledging that stronger connections to culture and country build stronger individual and collective identities, a sense of self-esteem, resilience, and improved outcomes across the other determinants of health including education, economic stability and community safety" (n.p.). This cultural approach is contrasted with the social determinants of health model that Brown (ibid) contends accepts inequalities and takes a deficit view to Aboriginality. Cultural determinants of wellbeing instead recognise strong connection to culture and cultural identity as protective factors (Dockery, 2017), which also contribute to educational outcomes (Dockery, 2010).

A growing body of health literature has found participation in social and cultural activities is positively related to health and wellbeing (Pinxten & Lievens, 2014; Helliwell & Putnam, 2004; Uphoff et al., 2013). While interest in cultural wellbeing is growing, there has been little theorisation of the concept in education although some recent research has extended theorising around cultural wellbeing in a schooling context (Emery, Miller, West & Nailon, 2015). In their research Emery and colleagues discussed cultural wellbeing in relation to Bourdieu's theories of social and cultural capital. In reporting on a small-scale case study

conducted with educators in a cultural arts class, Emery and colleagues found that educators perceived they supported cultural wellbeing through enhancing students' social and cultural capital. The educators in the study employed arts pedagogies to afford opportunities for connections with community members and with cultural practices.

This paper extends upon the findings of these previous bodies of research to report findings that demonstrate the importance of diversity to cultural wellbeing supporting the further theorising of cultural wellbeing in relation to valuing difference. This study explores cultural wellbeing in early years classroom communities and the next section outlines the methodology of the study.

Methods

The study combined constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) and situational analysis (Clarke, 2005) in theorising cultural wellbeing.

Two research questions frame this inquiry

(i) What meanings do educators make of cultural wellbeing?, and
(ii) How do educators support cultural wellbeing in classroom communities?

Constructivist grounded theory (CGT) (Charmaz, 2014) was employed to generate conversations and rich data around cultural wellbeing with educators. CGT is a recent iteration of the grounded theory approach to research, initially described by Glaser and Strauss (1967), in which the study of social processes and action is central, and which values the interaction between the researcher and participants (Charmaz, 2014). In keeping with CGT principles, the concepts from the literature review were not imposed upon the interviews, observations or analysis. Rather, they provided a starting point for looking at the data, and linkages were made where the data resonated with the concepts (Charmaz, 2014).

Participants in the study included early childhood educators and early years' school teachers as well as social workers employed within schools to deliver wellbeing programs for children. Interviews were conducted with 13 educators across early childhood education and schooling sectors across a range of socio-economic locations encompassing low socio-economic status (low SES) settings and high socio-economic settings (high SES) (See Table 1 for list of participants). This article draws mainly upon the data generated with educators working with children in the early years (which according to Australia's Early Years Learning Framework includes children from birth to 8 years). Participants were selected employing theoretical sampling in keeping with the CGT methodology (Charmaz, 2014). Theoretical sampling involves participants or other data sources being selected purposefully as the research progresses "for

their ability to provide data that would confirm, challenge or expand an emerging theory" (Kennedy & Lingard, 2006, p. 104). Pseudonyms are employed to maintain participant confidentiality.

Clarke's (2005) Situational Analysis was employed to support the analysis in order to interrogate the complex relationships at work in the data. "Situational Analysis requires what is present in the situation and, more pertinently, what operates as conditions, to be empirically discernible and traceable within the data" (James, 2013, p. 38).

Results

Educators perceived cultural wellbeing as enriching children's learning through diverse community and cultural connections and diverse place connections. These findings exhibited differences across social locations which are explored through the educators' comments.

Diverse community and cultural connections

Cultural wellbeing was discussed as children's sense of connection to family, friends and community. For school arts project manager Belinda, cultural wellbeing was "how we relate to each other", which resonated with arts educator Kathryn's depiction of it as "connectedness to other people". Connectedness implies "mutual or synchronous awareness and understanding within and between members of a group or 'community',… and embodies a multi-layered sense of trust,… and mutually respected values" (Elliott, 2014, p. 192). This idea of connectedness between people was also central to cultural wellbeing as school-community arts producer Stella perceived it:

Cultural wellbeing I think is about participating with other people in your community where you live… I think it's about the richness of the life and the connections that you have within your place that you reside. So it is those simple things of sharing experiences together with other people. (Stella)

Two ideas emerge from Stella's perception of cultural wellbeing: that cultural wellbeing involves social participation, and further, the sharing of experiences. These aspects contribute to 'the richness of life' that characterises cultural wellbeing in Stella's view. Richness is defined in terms of 'plentiful quantities of something desirable' ('Richness', nd), and the 'richness' Stella spoke of was time and experiences shared with other people, which she referred to as 'those simple things'. This view affords the opportunity to consider cultural wellbeing in terms of the richness of experiences and time spent with other people in the everyday contexts of education.

A valuing of diversity was evident in the links educators made between cultural wellbeing and connections with a sense of self and community. Particular areas of emphasis included children's rights of self

expression, the value of diversity and the importance of inclusion. Stella, for example, conceived of cultural wellbeing as related to human rights for self expression suggesting,

cultural wellbeing might be that capacity to respond creatively, to respond and make sense of your life and identity…, and that you have the human right to be able to express that, and that's when it becomes cultural exchange or cultural participation. (Stella)

The ability to express one's identity was both a human right and essential for cultural wellbeing according to Stella, whose advocacy resonated with Articles 12 and 13 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). These articles uphold the rights of children and young people to voice their opinion on matters that impact their lives (Article 12) and to their freedom of expression (Article 13). According to Stella's perspective, processes of being and becoming are facilitated through cultural participation which she indicates is a human right and central to cultural wellbeing.

Cultural wellbeing was perceived as supporting students' capacities for making sense of identities through active participation in classroom communities. Educators described students' diverse cultural identities as an enrichment to cultural wellbeing in the classroom community. Primary school teacher Natalie perceived the importance of diversity being embraced rather than just 'tolerated' in her summation of cultural wellbeing as "seeing cultures not as an impact but as an enrichment". In this way, some participants linked the concept of cultural wellbeing to cultural diversity, and increasingly culturally diverse classroom communities. Diversity was something to be embraced, according to kindergarten teacher Chelsea who perceived cultural wellbeing as a "healthy culture of support for each other and healthy culture of respect for diversity. It's having a culture that's not in conflict." Inclusion was a core value for childcare centre leader Linda, who perceived cultural wellbeing as "people respecting other people's worlds" and the notion of developing community. She explained further:

In our community we have [people who are] Balinese, Korean, Japanese, and then how does this all come in and connect in here? That's what I wanted all the kids to know, that no matter where they come from or what their cultural beliefs are, in here, it's kind of like my sign says over there, we might all be different fish, but here in this school we all swim together. (Linda)

Linda recognised the diversity of the students and families who were part of the ECEC centre and perceived diversity as a central question for inquiring into. She answered her own question with reference to her centre's philosophy statement which drew upon the metaphor of different fish swimming together, signalling the sense of belonging and inclusion that was part of her perception of cultural wellbeing. Likewise art teacher Kirsty commented, "when I thought about cultural wellbeing, it's that idea of having diversity and belonging. When you belong you have a reason to be." These perspectives resonate with

the findings from the literature of the importance of connections, relationships and belonging for cultural wellbeing. They also invite consideration of cultural wellbeing as potentially connected to our innermost reasons for being and living together peacefully.

Diverse place connections

Educators further described cultural wellbeing as connection to places and the diversity of life. Places, particularly places with high natural values, provided a tangible site for educators to locate cultural wellbeing. Educators perceived that children relate to place particularly in their localities, and cultural wellbeing was associated with children's connections to places and especially to nature.

School arts educator Charles suggested cultural wellbeing "is about sense of place… and it's being able to take that further than sense of place. It's being able to creatively express your sense of place or to have an exchange of sense of place with someone in some ways." Charles is co-producer of a school-community arts project in Tasmania which has a strong emphasis on place, bringing together prep-aged children and families to build billy carts together for playing with in local streets. Experiencing a sense of place was important for cultural wellbeing in Charles' view. The notion of a sense of place has been described as an emotional bond which people tend to form with places (Williams & Stewart, 1998). Charles offered some insight into how people might come to form emotional bonds with places through his further suggestion that cultural wellbeing involved being able to 'express' your sense of place. Being able to express or exchange a sense of place with other people requires a level of freedom of expression.

In the connections that educators made between place and cultural wellbeing, one particular type of place mentioned more frequently than any other was nature. Both nature and the outdoors emerged as places that were important for cultural wellbeing in the interviews. A growing body of evidence has found that connecting children with nature is important for a range of reasons including physical health and emotional wellbeing (Louv, 2008; Sobel, 2005).

Kindergarten teacher Chelsea suggested cultural wellbeing was "to do with the people that you live with, and the places you live and connections that unite places and people… And if you have really healthy connections you have cultural wellbeing." From her teaching practice working closely with young children Chelsea perceived "the really rich experiential learning happens in the great outdoors." Real-world, place-based learning experiences are advocated as educational approaches which need to be more widely included within formal school structures and processes (Louv, 2008; Sobel, 2005). Asked to describe what cultural wellbeing would look like, Chelsea explained further:

Children would be collaborating with each other and they would be supporting each other, and communicating well. Outdoors you would see a lot more crossover of social groups, you'd see a great deal of intermingling between the children. And they would be working together, they'd be carrying big logs up the hill together, making beautiful aesthetic sorts of things together in the bush. (Chelsea)

The outdoors is characterised here as a less constrained space for student learning, in contrast to the more structured classroom environment. In Chelsea's depiction this was consequential for cultural wellbeing in terms of the agency it afforded children in working, socializing and collaborating together. Chelsea identified natural learning settings of the school garden and nearby nature reserve as core locations in her teaching practice, referring to nature as 'the third teacher'. This resonates with the Reggio Emilia approach to education which positions 'the environment' as the third teacher (the other two being the teacher and the child) (Strong-Wilson & Ellis, 2007, p. 40). Chelsea perceived the richness of the experiences of outdoor learning environments and the requirements of nature as central to cultural wellbeing.

Outdoor educator Dan described the importance of children finding 'a cultural place' with which to develop a personal connection or attachment. The concept of place attachment describes the symbolic relationship formed by people giving culturally shared emotional or affective meanings to a particular space or place (Low & Altman, 1992; Low, 2013). Relph (1976) argues that place attachment is so foundational that "to be human is to live in a world that is filled with significant places: to be human is to have and to know your place" (p. 1).

Dan's perception of cultural wellbeing as involving connection with the natural environment was part of his concern relating to the distance he perceived between young people and nature. Dan described his Education Outdoors role as getting students into natural environments explaining: "understanding the processes and the ecosystems involved, and engaging with those environments through fun activities gives students an opportunity to reconnect." Involving children in activities in outdoor environments was one way of overcoming the disconnection of young people from nature that Dan perceived compromised cultural wellbeing. Nature based learning provides students with opportunities to discover who they are in relation to the natural world, contends Phenice and Griffore (2003). This resonated with Dan's perception of his work as an outdoor educator as "helping students to find their own cultural place". He explained:

Ultimately the aim of whatever it is you're doing is for the students to be immersed in that environment for a period of time where they have no choice but to engage with it. To develop… a sense of appreciation, a sense of understanding, it could be a sense of connectedness to it, in order to understand their place in

it. And I don't just mean just the environment but I guess I'm also talking philosophically here about their place in the bigger picture as well. (Dan)

Dan's perceptions of cultural wellbeing extend upon Phenice and Griffore's (2003) view that taking students into outdoor environments was not only an opportunity for students to discover who they are in relation to the natural world, but also an opportunity to develop understandings about who they are in relation to 'the bigger' philosophical questions of life. Through immersing students in 'real-world' natural environments, Dan was able to find opportunities to introduce children to larger questions about their relatedness to the world. Phenice and Griffore (2003) contend this can lead to a stronger sense of bonding with the self. This advances the findings of the previous section in which cultural wellbeing was perceived as connections to self and others, interweaving this with a connection to place and nature.

Providing opportunities to encounter and experience diverse experiences of the world was integral to educators' perceptions of cultivating cultural wellbeing. The research found that early childhood classroom communities can be fertile departure points for young children to engage in experiences which value diversity and support wellbeing. The opportunities for young children to engage in such experiences however appeared to be connected to the social locations of schools and to processes of accountability and assessment, which variously enabled and constrained educators in their approaches to supporting cultural wellbeing.

Educators described supporting cultural wellbeing in classroom communities through engaging children in learning through experiential and play based pedagogies which educators valued for students in the early years. Play is an important cultural practice of early childhood (Marsh, 2004), and play based learning is a valued pedagogy employed by early childhood educators. "Pedagogy is reflection about educational experiences that are characterised by values, goals, intentionality, intrinsically relational (or intersubjective), situated in culture and in time, and asymmetric" (Mantovani, 2007, p. 1115). The Early Years Learning Framework in Australia specifically emphasises the importance of play for children's healthy development, relationship building and wellbeing (DEEWR, 2009, p. 9).

Arts producer Charles described the way the experience of community coming together to build billy carts with children made available to children an enriching cultural experience that supported wellbeing.

We provide avenues for creative free play, imaginative expression. Unstructured, you know, surprising and delightful…In simple terms with [the billy cart program], it was very much about encouraging children to tap into what they care about and think of their hopes and dreams and their favourite things and put materials in front of them and let them go. (Charles)

In this way educators conveyed ideas that experiential pedagogies could enrich cultural wellbeing amongst the classroom community.

Some educators however reported being unable to extend to young children 'rich' opportunities to access nourishing experiences of learning and play perceived as important for cultural wellbeing. Prep teacher Lauren explained how she valued play based learning as an avenue for supporting cultural wellbeing for her students:

We're dealing with four year olds and five year olds, and play is their day, play is the way they learn, play is the way they express who they are. And as an expression of who they are, their culture is everything. Play to me is the driver for how a child expresses themself in that setting. (Lauren)

However Lauren explained that she was denied permission to engage students in play based learning by the school leadership who had informed her that play was "not our agenda here" (Lauren). Rather than being supported to enable children's access to play, Lauren reported being reprimanded by the school principal when he noticed her engaging students in such activities. When asked what she thought the school leadership expected to see when they entered her classroom, Lauren responded, "They expect to be seeing children sitting at desks I believe, doing handwriting probably. And, you know, maths looking at a board".

Lauren explained that despite presenting evidence to the school leadership from educational research asserting the pedagogical value of play and experiential approaches to children's learning and wellbeing, the school's agenda appeared firmly focused on the National Assessment Program literacy and numeracy (NAPLAN) which is administered annually in all Australian schools (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2011). Lauren indicated that she had been unable to alter this despite her many 'passionate and heated' conversations with school leadership about the need for a shift towards approaches which nurtured children's wellbeing, and commented:

These children need to be happy and nurtured and cared for in our education settings. In my school community, it's quite a low socio economic area, these children are frequently coming from homes where there's discontent, homes where there's domestic violence. They're coming to school and need a place to be nurtured. And I don't believe that sitting five years olds down at a desk is the right way to go about nurturing children. (Lauren)

Lauren's concerns about current classroom practices for children resonated with those of Valerie, an Aboriginal arts educator in a low SES school who worked primarily with Aboriginal children. Valerie valued

the idea of engaging children through outdoor learning, however she worked in a school where there were few safe or suitable outdoor spaces. Valerie commented:

I think that's one of the things about learning now is it's mainly focused on the inside, it's not out in the big world… and the students become very alienated from the natural world. I think the way we do education now is institutionalizing children, they become like little marching soldiers.

In Valerie's view, the way that contemporary schooling takes place largely indoors has a sameness and regularity to which children become accustomed, which is not beneficial for cultural wellbeing. The comments from educators including Lauren and Valerie who work with children in low SES schools raise concerns when considered in relation to the literature that connects cultural wellbeing with overall wellbeing.

Discussion

Interrogating the findings in relation to the social locations in which the educators taught revealed that educators who worked in low socio-economic status (SES) schools described multiple effects of socioeconomic disadvantage which impacted on their capacities to support cultural wellbeing. In addition to indicating limitations in accessing suitable resources within low SES schools, such as outdoor learning spaces as reported by Valerie, there were differences in educators' accounts of their autonomy over daily curriculum and pedagogical decision-making. Analysis of the origins of the constraints revealed a common factor was the regime of high stakes testing, which privileges literacy and numeracy skill training in schools. Recent research has found that such constriction in the pedagogies employed by teachers due to national assessment regimes has become commonplace in schooling in Australia (Polesel, Rice & Dulfer, 2014). Rice, Dulfer, Polesel, & O'Hanlon (2015) found that the testing regimes were pushing some schools towards 'drill and kill pedagogies' (p. 82). This constriction of pedagogical practice was evident in the present study in Lauren's account.

Hardy (2016) found that in low SES contexts the teaching emphasis focuses on students attaining basic literacy and numeracy outcomes, which are part of a regime of accountability. Such circumstances typically involve an emphasis on 'NAPLAN practices and pedagogies' in an effort to improve the school's NAPLAN scores. This relates to the idea of teachers training students to produce 'acceptable data' as Lauren described, an idea which appeared in to be present in the accounts of various educators in low SES schools and centres in this study with effects including the aforementioned limits to pedagogical options accepted as legitimate for educators to employ in the classroom, and limiting the opportunities for students to engage and play in environments outside the classroom despite these environments being perceived as supportive of cultural wellbeing. There appeared to be pressure to keep children inside the

classroom, since the classroom was the location where literacy and numeracy instruction was delivered. It is noteworthy that the barriers that educators in low SES schools faced in seeking to engage students in outdoor environments and in more experiential pedagogies were absent from the perceptions of educators from high SES schools and ECEC centres.

In describing how they supported cultural wellbeing in classroom communities, educators in high SES schools conveyed multiple ways in which socioeconomic advantages enabled them to offer enriching opportunities. Educators including Dan and Chelsea were able to afford the children in their care access to enriched pedagogies and experiences connecting with community and places, which support cultural wellbeing. The findings of this research revealed that educators in high SES schools and centres had greater liberty to 'teach their way', using their preferred pedagogical approaches and having discretion over the content taught. Bernstein(1996) theorises that from the beginning of their school lives, children in high SES schools have numerous material advantages over low SES school students, and the effects of such early advantages continue to widen as the school years progress. Bourdieu further theorises that children from high SES backgrounds are likely to arrive at school with understandings of foundational aspects of school learning resulting from young children's everyday immersion in a home habitus enriched by cultural capital including books and other learning resources (Bourdieu, 1984). With the learning basics already instilled, accordingly educators in high SES environments can spend more time focusing on higher order learning and supporting cultural wellbeing.

Thus patterns in the data revealed that educators in high SES schools tend to be enabled to support cultural wellbeing, while in low SES schools, educators reported considerable constraints in supporting cultural wellbeing. The elements that variously enable or constrain educators included access to resources, facilities and materials, and the autonomy to teach using their professional judgement in relation to their knowledge of students and their backgrounds, and their preferred pedagogies.

Conclusion

This exploratory study of cultural wellbeing in classroom communities found that educators perceived that cultural wellbeing involved connecting students with enriching experiences of people, places and cultures. Such connections were afforded through experiential pedagogies including placed based pedagogies, play based learning and arts rich learning. Educators' practices of supporting cultural wellbeing involved venturing out into the community and engaging with the diversity of people and places within the community. Supporting such experiences was perceived as important for fostering a sense of connection and belonging which is foundational to cultural wellbeing.

While there were opportunities for educators to support cultural wellbeing across all social locations, there were greater opportunities available to educators in high socioeconomic locations.

Educators who described having some autonomy employed their favoured pedagogies for supporting cultural wellbeing in accordance with their professional judgement and described the pedagogies and teaching practices they employed as being supportive processes for cultural wellbeing. When educators were denied the autonomy to exercise their professional judgement, for example, by regulations, lack of resources or by the school's administration, they described experiencing inner conflict between what they knew to be the best ways of supporting the wellbeing of a particular group of children, and the prescribed ways of teaching they were required to implement. This research concluded that enabling student encounters with diversity can support cultural wellbeing in classroom communities, and that this is implicated in circumstances in which competing concerns between educators' professional judgement and the regime of accountability create competing sets of priorities, which can construct student wellbeing as a lesser priority of education

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HOW AND HOW MUCH DO I KNOW ABOUT DYSLEXIA? - SELF-EVALUATION OF STUDENTS OF TEACHER TRAINING STUDIES AT FACULTY OF EDUCATION AT UNIVERSITY OF JOSIP JURAJ STROSSMAYER IN OSIJEK

Zrinka Fišer

Abstract

Accordin to the Rose report (2009), dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. The main characteristics of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed. Early signs of dyslexia can be recognized in pre-school age and they include word mispronunciation, limited vocabulary, poor rhyming skills and difficulty in following instructions. The formal diagnosis of dyslexia can be made after the first grade therefore it is crucial that class teachers are able to recognize the early signs of dyslexia. This is important for early diagnosis and intervention which are key factors for successful integration of students with dyslexia. The quality of class teachers' education in Croatia has been the aim of several research (e.g. Erdeljac & Franc, 2012; Fišer & Dumančić, 2014; Kaldonek-Crnjaković & Fišer, 2016; Kuvač i Vancaš, 2003; Radetić Paić, 2015). The results have implied that participants' teaching practice is not entirely inclusive and that the curriculum of Faculties of Teacher Education should include modules on special education. The present research confirmed the same shortcomings in the education of pre-service teachers of University of Josip Juraj Strossmayer in Osijek who have not participated in such a study yet.

65 students of final year of Class Teacher Studies at 'Josip Juraj Strossmayer' University of Osijek and its branch department in Slavonski Brod participated in the study. The analysis of the gathered data revealed that more than half of the participants estimated they would not be adequately qualified to teach students with dyslexia. They also reported that the internet was a leading source of information about dyslexia and that they were willing to undergo further education to learn more about how to teach students with dyslexia.

Key words: dyslexia, teacher training studies, students' self-evaluation

Introduction

Although dyslexia is a very heterogeneous difficulty regarding its symptoms, there are some common features many dyslexics share and they are mostly defined by difficulties occurring while learning to read and write. Early diagnosis of dyslexia and adequate intervention are crucial for successful education of children with dyslexia. Observation of children who are at risk of developing a learning difficulty usually takes place during their first year of schooling and during that period children are taught skills of reading and writing by their school teachers. After children are diagnosed with a condition of learning difficulty, their teachers should adjust their teaching methods in order to accommodate individual needs of such children who are integrated into mainstream schools and follow an individualized program.

Definitions of inclusive education vary from educating students with intellectual disabilities by improved integration into the mainstream education programs (Michailakis & Reich, 2009) to considering it as a key concept of education systems using diversity in building righteous and democratic societies (Acedo, 2008). Inclusion in Croatia is considered to be a process in which schools respond to individual needs of all students by allowing individualization of the teaching process, aids and resources for equal education (Batarelo Kokić, Vukelić & Ljubić, 2009). Inclusion of children with special education needs (SEN) into in Croatian schools began in 1980s and it is implemented through integration into mainstream primary and secondary schools. Ways of educating students with special educational needs in Croatia are listed in the Law on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (NN, Nos. 87/08, 86/09, 92/10, 105/10, 90/11, 5/12, 16/12, 86/12, 126/12, 94/13 &152/14) and in the Law on Education of Students with Developmental Disabilities in Primary and Secondary Schools (NN, No. 24/15). The term *students with disabilities* includes students with developmental difficulties, students with learning difficulties, behavioral and emotional problems, and students with difficulties conditioned by educational, social, economic, cultural and linguistic factors.

According to the law, dyslexia is one of the impairments of language, speech and voice communication and it is defined as specific learning difficulty with reading. The Croatian Dyslexia Association also defines developmental dyslexia as a difficulty in learning how to read (www.hud.hr). Students with SEN can be enrolled in regular mainstream class divisions if they can complete the regular curriculum program with individualized approach in teaching. However, such decision depends on the recommendation of the school's committee of experts in the field of developmental and learning difficulties. Models of individualization in the teaching process are determined by the degree of the student's independence, working methods, skills and knowledge testing, student's activity, technological and didactical aids, and spatial conditions. Individualization could be applied to one or all school subjects and should be elaborated by school teachers and school team experts.

Suitable programs and forms of educating students with SEN are provided by school teachers. Such programs are enriched with pedagogical-didactic adjustments to the mainstream programs.

Overview

Since teachers are the ones directly involved in the process of inclusion and integration of students with special education needs such as dyslexia, they need to be well trained in recognizing individual needs of such students. Findings of many studies suggest that teachers who obtained their diplomas at Croatian Faculties of Teacher Training and Faculties of Social Studies have insufficient competences for teaching students with SEN (Batarelo Kokić, Vukelić & Ljubić, 2009; Bouilet, 2008; Erdeljac & Franc, 2012; Fišer & Dumančić, 2014; Kaldonek-Crnjaković & Fišer, 2016; Kuvač & Vancaš, 2003; Skočić-Mihić et al., 2014). Since the Croatian education system is meant to be inclusive, teachers need to be competent to educate all students. Such competences include, among other practical and theoretical knowledge and skills, the knowledge of specific educational needs and the ability to identify them, the knowledge of didactic and methodological ways to differentiate curriculum and the teaching tools, the knowledge of consultative working techniques, practical experience in educating children with special education needs and willingness to be included in the team work as well as a life-long self education (Carroll, Forlin & Jobling, 2003; Ernest et al. 2011; Odom & Diamond, 1998; Purude et al. 2009; Sari, Çeliköz, & Seçer, 2009; Skočić-Mihić et al., 2014.). The teacher training program in Croatian faculties includes only one compulsory module on inclusive education (Bouillet, 2008.). As the research findings suggest, pre and in-service teachers do not feel comfortable enough to implement inclusive approach (Stanisavljević-Petrović & Stančić, 2010). This is a clear indication that tertiary institutions do not offer a sufficient university programs which would prepare teachers to work with SEN students and teachers have little opportunities to develop inclusive practice once they are in-service.

Research background

The interest in researching dyslexia became noticable during 1970s. A certain number of those researches was aimed at reveling how much teachers know about dyslexia and the adjustments in teaching students with dyslexia. The study conducted in Croatia in 2003. involved students of the Faculty of Teacher Education (Kuvač & Vancaš, 2003). The authors were exploring the question of how 57 students of third and fourth year of the mentioned Faculty in Zagreb knew about the difficulties related to language, speech, reading and writing. The findings of their research suggested that 41% of third year and 37% of fourth year students did not provide correct answers to the questions about dyslexia, therefore the authors concluded that teacher training program offered at the Faculty should include further specialization in the field of language difficulties.

Another study with similar research questions was conducted in Croatia in 2012. It was a pilot research and it involved 44 educators, 44 schoolmasters and 53 teachers employed in Croatian kindergartens and schools (Erdeljac & Franc, 2012). The research aimed at exploring the knowledge they had of dyslexia, how they taught children with dyslexia, how they acquired knowledge about dyslexia and how it affected teaching/learning process in classrooms. The findings of the research suggested the unsystematic and insufficient training in the field of dyslexia and methods of educating children with dyslexia, the need of research of wider scope and revision of existing college and university syllabi.

Fišer and Dumančić (2014) also conducted a pilot research aiming to construct a questionnaire for investigating the levels of knowledge about dyslexia and the affinity towards adjusting methods of teaching students with dyslexia. 108 teachers of foreign languages employed in Croatian primary schools participated in the research. The results suggested, among other, the need for further education of teachers regarding adjustments in teaching students with dyslexia as well as the moderate affinity of participants towards implementing such adjustments.

Skocic Mihic *et al.* (2014) conducted a research in 2010. The aim of their study was to identify how pre-service teachers in Croatia self-evaluate their competence to teach students with special education needs. 302 students of Teacher Training College in Rijeka participated in the research using a structured questionnaire. The results showed that students feel relatively comfortable only in applying different adjustments such as organization of classroom furniture and space and using different materials for learning while they showed only moderate confidence in their ability to directly teach students with special education needs.

Methodology

The aim of the present study was to find out what are the extracurricular sources of students' knowledge about dyslexia and the level of self-competence they have in teaching students with dyslexia. The research also aimed at exploring the participants desire to undergo further training in teaching such students.

39 students of the final year of the Teacher training Faculty in Osijek and 26 students of final year of the Faculty's branch department in Slavonski Brod participated in this study. 63 of the participants were female, while only two were male.

The questionnaire was designed by the author and it was based on the previously mentioned studies of the similar focus (Erdeljac i Franc, 2012; Fišer & Dumančić, 2014; Kuvač & Vancaš, 2003). It included eight questions. Four questions aimed at collecting descriptive data about the participants and the other four were research questions closely connected to the aims of the research:

- Have you participated in seminars or workshops covering the theme of dyslexia?
- What is your extracurricular source of knowledge about dyslexia?
- Do you consider yourself competent enough to teach students with dyslexia?
- Would you like to continue your education in teaching students with dyslexia?

The questionnaire was distributed to the participants in their final semester during February and March of 2015. It was an anonymous questionnaire and none of the participants' confidential information has been revealed in this text.

Results

Analysis of answers to the first research questions showed that 39 or 60% participants have participated in seminars and workshops covering the theme of dyslexia. Further analysis revealed that students from the branch department in Slavonski Brod have participated in such workshops and seminars in a greater percentage (77%) then their colleagues from Osijek (49%) (Figure 1).
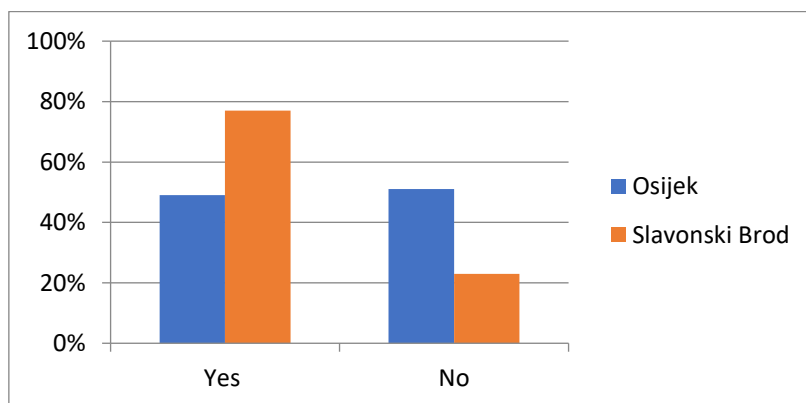

Figure 1: The analysis of answers to the first research question: "Have you participated in seminars or workshops covering the theme of dyslexia?"

Next research question dealt with extracurricular source of information about dyslexia and it was a multiple choice question (Figure 2). Internet proved to be the leading source of information (44%), followed by vocational literature (23%), TV (17%), newspapers and magazines (12%), and personal experience (4%). The analysis of answers from Osijek's students and their colleagues from Slavonski Brod revealed some interesting differences. Both groups of students chose internet as their prime source of information (42% of students from Osijek and 47% of students from Slavonski Brod) and vocational literature following in the second place (23% of students from Osijek and 21% of students from Slavonski Brod). Interestingly, students from Osijek found TV to be an equally valuable source of information about dyslexia as were newspapers and magazines, while students from Slavonski Brod think the same way about TV and

vocational literature. Two students from Slavonski Brod and one student from Osijek had personal experience with dyslexia while none of the participants found any information regarding this learning difficulty in the fiction novels.
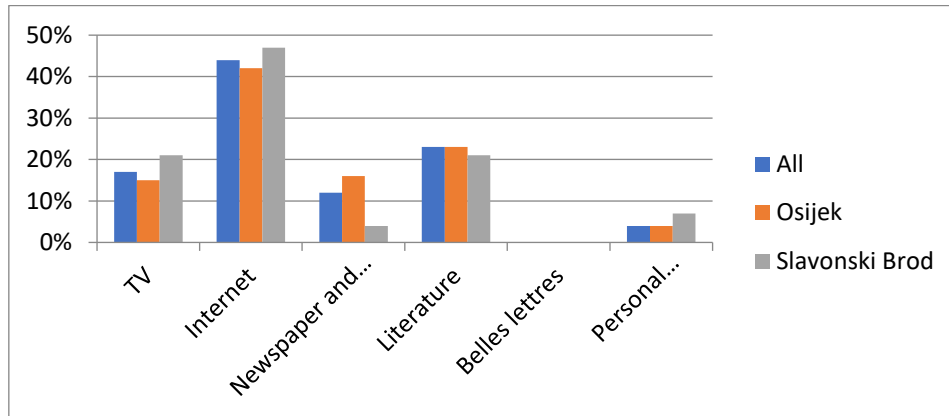

Figure 2: The analysis of answers to the second research question: "What is your extracurricular source of knowledge about dyslexia?"

The analysis of the third question which aimed at researching participants' self competence in teaching students with dyslexia also revealed some interesting findings (Figure 3). 60% of all participants considered themselves to be competent enough to teach such students, while 40% believed they have not yet reached that level of competence. The analysis of the two groups of participants suggests there were differences between students from Osijek and their colleagues from Slavonski Brod. More than half of students from Osijek consider themselves not competent enough for that task (51%), while their beliefs share not even one fourth of the group from Slavonski Brod (23%).
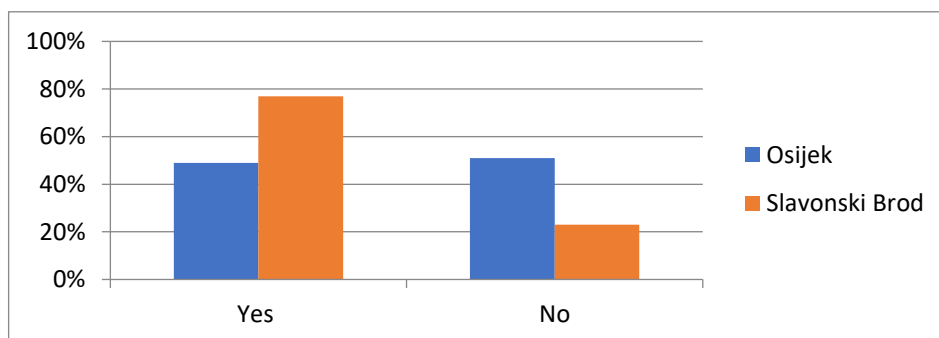

Figure 3: The analysis of answers to the third research question: 'Do you consider yourself competent enough to teach students with dyslexia?'

The analysis of the question investigating participants' willingness to undergo further specialization in teaching students with dyslexia showed very similar results in both groups (Figure 4). 97% of participants

from Osijek and 85% of students from Slavonski Brod said they would like to continue their specialization, while 3% of students from Osijek and 15% of students from Slavonski Brod do not share their interest.
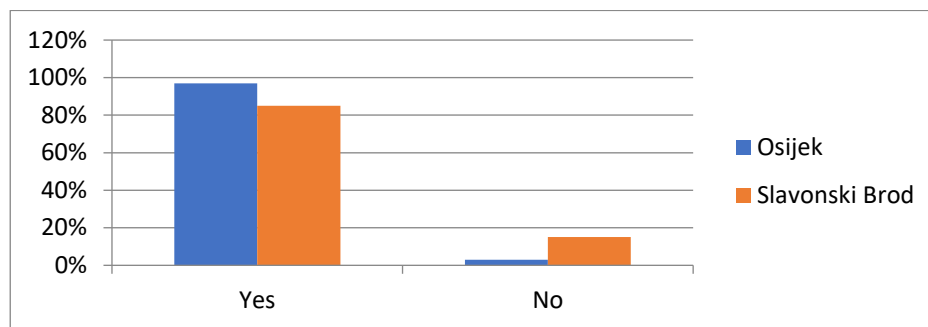

Figure 4: The analysis of answers to the fourth research question: 'Would you like to continue your education in teaching students with dyslexia?'

Discussion

The analysis of the responses to the first questions, which asked the participants about participating in workshops and seminars covering the theme of dyslexia, showed a noticeable difference between students from Osijek and students from Slavonski Brod. Only 49% of students from Osijek have participated in such vocational training as opposed to 77% of students from Slavonski Brod. One cannot but wonder what could be the reason for such findings. There is a possibility that the students from Slavonski Brod have more opportunities to participate in such seminars and workshops or it may be the case of the faculty teachers who urge their students to take greater part in extracurricular activities. It is very unlikely that Slavonski Brod hosts more of such workshops and seminars since Osijek is a cultural and educational centre of the entire eastern part of Croatia where Slavonski Brod is only one of the bigger cities in that region. It is also very unlikely that students from Slavonski Brod have different faculty obligations since same professors teach at both faculties following the same faculty program. If the answer lies in the motivation of students, it would be interesting to research such a question but on a larger sample of participants. There is also a plausible possibility that differences in these findings are simply due to a small number of participants.

The results of the analysis of the second question indicate that internet is a leading source of extracurricular information about dyslexia. The use of media in teaching can expand the range and variety of experiences available in classrooms of all educational levels. The online media are linked to the network of external sources and can therefore provide access to people, ideas and/or information outside of a classroom setting, which may further lead to broadening of ideas and points of view (Fahy, 2004). A distance education can provide trainee teachers with general principles of education, improve their

knowledge of the subject they will teach; teach them about children, the curriculum and pedagogy; and develop their classroom skills (UNESCO, 2002). The use of ICT can enhance and enrich teacher training program and provide more flexible and effective ways for in-service and pre-service professional development. The students chose vocational literature to be a second best source while newspapers/magazines and TV dropped to the third and fourth place. The growing use of internet simply pushed out TV and books from the leading position in acquiring knowledge. The findings of this research also suggest the importance of ICT in the educational system.

The responses to the question about how competent students believe to be in teaching children with dyslexi provided interesting findings: the students from Osijek thought themselves to be far less competent in teaching such children than did their colleagues from Slavonski Brod. It could be the result of participating in seminars and workshops covering the theme of dyslexia where students from Slavonski Brod gained more knowledge and insight in the matter of dyslexia. A study conducted to discover the relationship between extracurricular professional development and the level of self competence in teaching children with dyslexia and conducted on a greater number of participants, could give answers to this question. It would be uncertain to draw more concrete conclusions from these results since only 63 students participated in the study.

The analysis of the answers provided for the fourth question could also be connected to those of the first question. Fewer students from Slavonski Brod expressed their willingness to continue or expand their education in teaching children with dyslexia than did their colleagues from Osijek. If the students from Slavonski Brod participated more frequently in seminars and workshops dealing with dyslexia and therefore feel more competent to teach dyslexic children, than a fewer number of those students would be willing to continue their education in the field of teaching children with dyslexia since they would already feel competent enough. Such a hypothesis would need to be tested on a larger number of participants.

Conclusion

The findings of this study are in concordance with the findings of the other studies which examined the competence of teachers in teaching students with dyslexia and which suggest teachers' relatively poor or mere moderate understanding of learning difficulties (Batarelo Kokić, Vukić & Ljubić, 2009). In-service teachers generally do not possess enough knowledge to identify learning difficulties and they are not able to provide adequate adjustments to meet specific needs of children with SEN. Professional development workshops and seminars have a positive impact on teachers' perceived ability to teach students with learning difficulty (DeSimone & Parmar, 2006) but they are offered and taken infrequently. Even more, such workshops and seminars do not usually focus on adjustments in teaching methods, but merely on overall classroom accommodations which are applicable to any of the school subjects. Since each school

subject is bound to specific methodological steps unique to the subject matter, there should be a set of teaching methods designed for each of those subjects. For instance, the effects dyslexia can have on learning a foreign language depends on the orthography of a given language (for detailed description of dyslexia in different languages see the report „The Cost A8" in Seymour, Aro & Erskine, 2003) which then shapes the adjustments in teaching methods. Therefore those adjusted teaching methods and approaches cannot be used in the same exact manner while teaching, for example, geography in students' mother tongue of a different orthography.

However, as the number of the participants in this study was low, general conclusions cannot be formed. A study with similar research questions should be conducted on a greater number of students of institutions that provide teacher training. Yet, based on the results of the present study, it can be certainly said that there is a general need for expanding the existing teacher training syllabi to modules that cover teaching children with various educational needs.

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MENTAL HEALTH OF PRESCHOOL AGE CHILDREN: STORYTELLING AND DOES IT HELP?

Eleonora Glavina & Berta Bacinger Klobučarić

Abstract

Mental health care has to start at an early age because this means investing in mental health in the adult age. As one way of strongly encouraging developmental needs of children, we chose the activity of storytelling. Storytelling enriches vocabulary, helps in designing concepts, and encourages creativity. Storytelling also contributes to social skills development. Moreover, it encourages the creation of a bond between the child and adult, which presents the development of emotional stability.

Storytelling as an important activity for children's development, their mental health, and social skills is promoted in kindergartens in Čakovec, Croatia. Kindergarten teachers were educated on the psychological features of storytelling and were provided with a list of stories to be read to children. Afterwards, they kept diaries on storytelling and activities for children.

We used Pros/Ag scale to observe the impact of storytelling and connected activities on the social and emotional development of children. The scale was used at the beginning and the end of the school year during which time storytelling and connected activities were implemented in everyday work. 152 children were tested and the results showed that the level of prosocial behaviour increased, while the level of aggressive behaviour remained the same.

This project purports the benefit of storytelling on developing prosocial behaviour in preschool age children, therefore it should be used more often in the teachers' everyday work.

Introduction

Professional procedures and support aimed at preservation of the population's mental health are based on the assumption that, for the mental health of adults, an investment in the mental health of children is needed. And the care for the mental health of children begins at their earliest age. The basis of the child's good mental health is ensured by providing the optimal conditions for his or her upbringing. In addition to elementary existential care, it is also necessary to meet the basic psychological needs of the child, such as creating conditions for the development of feelings of security and attachment, building and strengthening the child's self-confidence, and so on. These serve as protective factors in the preservation of children's mental health, thereby implying developmentally appropriate incentives, an adequate interaction with others, and a stimulating environment (Ljubešić, 2010). Preservation of mental health should be based on a proactive, preventive approach focused on the increase of individual and contextual protective factors (Rodrigues et al., 2012). Programs involving such an approach minimize emotional, social, and behavioural problems in children (Murta, 2007).

One of the most important forms of stimulating psychological developmental elements and child care in the psychological sense is storytelling to children – the activity is readily available and has long been known, but is being increasingly neglected. Likewise, the formation of the environment so that various printed materials, picture books, encyclopaedias, etc. are always available, allows the child to accept reading activities as a part of their everyday routine from the earliest age.

As early as in infancy, a child should be read to. Development of the routine of everyday storytelling to the child before their second year of life provides the child with a rich linguistic input which stimulates speech development and increases motivation for such activities (Duursma, 2007). Namely, the infant's brain is not fully developed and it will continue to develop during growing up, especially intensely in the first years of life. While listening to stories, brain activity intensifies, stimulating the development of neural bonds (Diamond, Hopson, 2006). Storytelling to the child encourages the creation of brain paths, the basis for the cognitive as well as general development.

Research has shown that families, parents/guardians, kindergarten teachers, and early childhood teachers play the most important role in the development of literacy and reading skills (Senechal, LeFevre, 2002), as well as lifelong attitudes toward reading and books in general (Evan et al., 2000). Reading to children of early age significantly contributes to their development of speech and a better understanding of the reading content (Mol et al., 2008). Children whose parents often read picture books and stories to them, and whose parents read and have their own book collections, begin their formal education with a richer dictionary and a more advanced understanding of the reading content in comparison to their peers who grew up in a more modest literary environment (Mol, Bus, 2011).

Storytelling to children enriches their early experiences and ensures broadmindedness. Stories and fairy tales reflect human traits, show vital life values, encourage the formation of healthy attitudes towards life and human community, toward oneself, and others. Reading to children of early age stimulates intellectual development. In their research, Siraj-Blatchford et al. (2002) have shown that children whose families engage in reading activities have better cognitive abilities than children without such an experience. In the cognitive sense, storytelling to children enhances their ability to solve problems and take initiative (Ortner, 1998), it helps them to understand the cause-and-effect relationship and shape the concepts, as well as promotes creativity.

Storytelling to children encourages emotional and social development of the child. This activity can speed up children's understanding of their own mental state and that of others, including desires, intentions, emotions, and beliefs (Rodrigues et al., 2012). In the case of minor behaviour difficulties, stories can help motivate and guide the child's behaviour, while in the case of major difficulties they can serve as a supplement to counselling or therapy (Ortner, 1998). Consequently, by storytelling children mature in the social sense, they learn to understand different people's behaviours, and discover differences among them. Stories stimulate thinking about others and social situations. It helps allows children to "enter the shoes" of other event participants and to become open to the possibility of understanding the situation from another perspective. Stories encourage children to create their own internal standards and teach them the rules of conduct among people. They also reflect positively on the ability to recognize and understand their own feelings and other people's feelings, as well as to adequately express their emotions. Reading stories that deal with emotions and the way they are related to thoughts and behaviour strongly contributes to the development of social cognition in children (Kiepert, 2017).

The extent to which stories dealing with social situations and relationships can positively affect the development of children's social skills is also emphasized by the fact that this activity is often included in therapeutic processes following disorders that manifest themselves through social functioning difficulties. One such disorder is the autistic spectrum of disorders. *Storytelling of social stories* is an intervention which uses storytelling to explain behavioural rules and social situations which may be confusing for children with autistic spectrum disorders. The said intervention is included in the behavioural interventions. It is based on brief descriptions of the expected behaviour presented in the form of a story created for each child in order to bring closer to their perspective a specific situation they might encounter (Weiss et al., 2009). The primary goal of these stories is to guide behaviour and reduce anxiety, and they often focus on internal states and behaviours (Prelock et al., 2011). The s*torytelling of social stories* intervention is also used as a complement to the primary therapy in the case of other difficulties (e.g. behavioural problems).

Stories and fairy tales present a very simple means of establishing interaction with the child and a convenient way of approaching them: the storytelling activity contributes to the closeness of the child with the adult reading to them, thus laying the foundation for a secure and emotionally stable development. Through storytelling, language and mental barriers between children and adults are surpassed, enabling the adults to experience the world from the position of the child. Reading provides a number of possibilities for engaging in both developing and stimulating, as well as interesting activities. Stories can be discussed with the child, and the knowledge found in stories can be connected to real life.

Storytelling activity can be conducted before bedtime, at any time during the day, indoors or outdoors, individually or in groups... Storytelling within the family unit should become a part of family rituals. Namely, rituals stimulate pleasant emotions, bring family members together, and deepen family stability. By being read to in kindergarten, kindergarten group, and during the discussion of the story, children learn to listen to each other, appreciate the feelings of others, and learn about reciprocity and communion.

Children love stories and fairy tales because they allow them to enter the world of imagination. In classic stories, the main hero usually deals with something unknown, and is propelled toward certain adventures. In identifying themselves with the heroes, children approach the very adventure that lies before them – that of growing up. On the road to independence, children will face unprecedented situations, meet diverse people, and encounter various obstacles, just as will the heroes from the stories (Lacovich, 2016).

Research has shown that early storytelling to children instigates a positive attitude toward reading as a way of acquiring knowledge and skills, and as a form of spending their free time (Mol, Bus, 2011). That is yet another reason for choosing reading to children as the central activity for the "Storytelling Workshop" project.

"Storytelling Workshop" Project

Bearing in mind the benefits of storytelling to children, kindergartens in the cities of Međimurje County, in cooperation with "Krijesnice" Association of Kindergarten Teachers, and the Institute of Public Health of Međimurje County, have started to carry out activities in the light of a proactive and public promotion of storytelling to children. The program – based on cross-sector cooperation – is termed "Storytelling Workshop," and its overall goal is to contribute to the psychological well-being of children by strengthening their social and emotional competence. Namely, new ways of thinking on children's development points increasingly to the importance of social competence development and an increasing number of experts are searching for the optimal way to develop social competences (Glavina, Visnjic-Jevtic, 2008). At the same time, research has shown that the environment quality in terms of availability of picture books,

reading books, and other literary content at an early age, as well as adults' children-oriented activities such as reading but also other forms of expression, represent the most important factor for the development of reading skills (Hood et al., 2008; Melhuish et al., 2008). That is the reason for which we have strived to create such an environment for children in the early and preschool education system.

At the beginning of the "Storytelling Workshop," kindergarten workers and parents were educated on children's mental health and the psychological features of the importance of storytelling to children. Furthermore, the conducted activities were aimed at:

→ Emphasizing the importance of storytelling to children to kindergarten teachers and

sensitizing them to tell stories and other literary content;

→ Encouraging the family environment to spend time constructively with the child by encouraging activities related to creating the habit of reading books and encouraging reading interest, such as developing a children's book collection at home, signing up for a library, and so on;

→ Creating a ritual and developing the reading habit of children, especially before starting school as a preparation for independent reading. Kindergarten teachers participated in an educational and interactive workshop on fairy tales and stories, led by professional storyteller Jasna Held. During the workshop, the basics of storytelling were discussed: expression, diction, simple set design, successful establishment of the relationship and communication with the audience, creation of atmosphere during storytelling, etc.

Furthermore, kindergarten teachers offered a list of contents to read to children – stories, fairy tales, picture books, other literary materials – developed in accordance with developmental needs and interests of children. The basic topics that are offered in the given stories are: (1) respect for diversity, (2) familiarity with the emotional world, (3) communion.

Research has shown that an interactive approach to reading and joint reading encourages numerous abilities and skills (Huebner, 2000). Since each story can serve as a basis for the implementation of interactive, educational as well as socio-emotional developmental activities, kindergarten teachers have proposed the implementation of games and interactive activities by kindergarten groups, in order to deliver the discussed content (artistic expression, role play, doll game, modelling game, field trip, discussion, poster or model making, relaxation exercises, dramatization...). The aim of these activities, among other things, is the learning of self-regulated behaviour, and promoting positive and prosocial values.

By trying to popularize storytelling as a form of spending quality time with children and to encourage as much reading as possible, the program continued to be implemented in various forms. Kindergarten

teachers were provided with support and permanent education on storytelling to children, wherein other kindergartens from Međimurje County were involved which did not participate in the research initially. The education and workshops carried out with kindergarten teachers are based on the wish to enter the children's world of imagination and emotion by experiencing images, movements, and other. With the aim of spreading the knowledge on the benefits of reading and storytelling to children, popular and scientific texts on this subject have been published in various media: Health Promotion Journal *Nove staze* (*New Paths)*, the *Croatian Public Health Magazine*, *Varaždin News* - local newspapers within the column *Psychowalk*, and the availability of the information is purported by the texts that are exposed at public places: in kindergartens, libraries, and public health institutes.

Methodology

Participants

A total of 120 children were included in the research: 62 (52%) girls and 58 (48%) boys between the ages of five and seven. The research included children who attended kindergarten groups throughout the entire pedagogical year. The assessors were kindergarten teachers who know the children very well and who work with them on a daily basis.

Measuring Instruments

The authors of the Pros/Ag scale used in the research, are Miomir Žužul and Vesna Vlahović Štetić (1989). The scale is standardized on the population of children in the Republic of Croatia. It consists of 20 particles that make up for two subscales in relation to the assessment of prosocial and aggressive behaviour. The assessors' task was to evaluate the child's behaviour described in the particle on a 5-degree scale. Linear summation of points provides two results: the result on the scale of the prosocial and the result on the scale of aggressive behaviour.

The effectiveness of the program was also evaluated qualitatively. For this purpose, a special table was prepared for each kindergarten teacher to note down what they read to children, which activities they engaged in after reading, and how the children reacted in relation to reading content or activities (interest, involvement, interaction among children...)

Procedure

Kindergarten teachers filled the Pros/Ag scale individually for each child at the beginning and at the end of the pedagogical year. During the pedagogical year, the teachers were involved in the said activities,

training, and workshops related to the "Storytelling Workshop" Project, as well as conducted reading and interactive activities related to the recommended reading content. The results obtained were processed in the PASW 18 statistical program.

After each reading, the teachers regularly filled the specially devised tables on reading and post-reading activities.

Results

Descriptive statistics and the T-test were used for the analysis of results of dependent samples. There was a statistically significant increase in prosocial behaviour of children at the end of the pedagogical year when compared to the beginning ($M_{prosoc}1 = 37.61$, SD1 = 7.28, $M_{prosoc}2 = 39.65$, SD2 = 7.58, t = 3.184, p < 01), exhibiting an increase in prosocial behaviour. There was no statistically significant change in aggressive behaviour ($M_{agr}1 = 19.6$, SD = 8.72, $M_{agr}2 = 19.7$, SD = 8.48, t = -0.306, p> 0.05). Given that we have, in analysing the descriptive statistics, found that there are differences in the prosocial and aggressive behaviour between girls and boys, we have decided to determine whether this difference is statistically significant. The results obtained show a statistically significant difference between girls' and boys' prosocial behaviour ($M_{boys} = 37.53$; SD1 = 7.21; $M_{girls} = 41.62$; SD2 = 7.43; t = -3.05; p <0.01) and aggressive behaviour ($M_{boys} = 22.86$, SD1 = 9.17, $M_{girls} = 16.91$, SD2 = 6.67, t = 4.07, p <0.01), wherein girls expressed more prosocial and less aggressive forms of behaviour.

Due to qualitative analysis of the kindergarten teachers' notes, the most commonly told children's stories were: H. Cooper's *Pumpkin Juice*; J.B. Baron's *Figaro, the Snoring Cat*; Đ. Miklaužić's *Super je biti različit (It's Great to be Different)*; A.N. Tolstoy's *The Big Beet Fairytale*; E. Montanari's *The Crocodile's True Colors*; T. Moroney's *When I'm Feeling Happy; … Sad; … Angry; …Scared*; G. Ortner's *Fairy Tales that Help Children*. Storytelling was most commonly followed by artistic activities: the use of different techniques and representations of various motives (feelings, toys...). Stories' contents were often discussed following the storytelling. Also, kindergarten groups often created role plays, imitations, and other dramatic forms (making of dolls, puppet theatre). Sometimes, after reading, there was also a walk with the associations on the reading content, or the children engaged in music-related locomotion games connected to the story. Stories stimulated creativity, and the children made various props such as picture books, cookbooks, dolls, wooden spoons, sticks...

Discussion

Senechal et al. (1998) divided the manner of exposing early-age children to literary experiences in two basic forms: formal and informal. The former refers to literal learning, while the latter refers to the message borne by the written text rather than the text itself. In our project "Storytelling Workshop," we emphasized the informal approach toward the reading content in order to determine to which extent the reading content can influence the increase of prosocial behaviour and reduce aggressive behaviour in children who engage in preschool education regularly. Valerio (2008) points out that a part of the success in social contacts depends on the ability of a person to recognize, imagine, and understand their psychological condition, as well as the psychological condition of others. Reading stories that deal with different social situations, emotional states, and different behavioural outcomes can enable children to be more successful in the above-mentioned tasks.

The obtained information on the increase of prosocial forms of behavior suggests a possible influence of storytelling and the following activities on the development of these forms of behaviour, which is not unusual since stories are rich in elements which promote socially desirable and positive forms of behaviour, as well as virtues. Stories do not offer contents dealing with aggressive topics (aggressive behaviour in social situations, ways of coping in situations featuring different opinions or wishes, etc.), which may explain the results which indicate that there no decrease in aggressive behaviour of children took place. To reduce aggressive behaviour, another form of work based on social learning from a specific situation should be practiced.

Results suggesting that girls show more prosocial and less aggressive forms of behaviour can be explained through the greater focus of girls on social relations, wherein we are not discussing differences at the individual level. Likewise, the measuring instrument itself is more focused on specific forms of behaviour and registers open forms of aggression, while passive forms are not covered. Some research suggests that girls focus on more passive forms of aggression, such as social manipulation and gossiping, which are not covered by the Pros/Ag scale.

As a disadvantage of this research, we emphasize the absence of a control group of children participating regularly in the educational system who did not participate in the "Storytelling Workshop" project, which limits our conclusions due to inability to compare them with a suitable group of children and possible changes that are a part of social learning as a result of being in a collective environment.

Likewise, we need to emphasize that the kindergarten teachers who conducted project activities were also the ones who rated the children on the Pros/Ag scale. Simultaneously, they were the most familiar with the children and were able to make assessments on children as expected in the abovementioned scale. However, this raises the question of their objectivity to a certain extent.

Future research should include a control group as well as objective assessors with the aim of increasing the validity and reliance of results.

Conclusion

The optimum social and emotional development of children in the first years of their life benefits from positive relationships with people who are close to them and an environment rich in developmentally appropriate incentives. Hence, from the child's earliest age, the activity of storytelling to the child should be practiced, and it should become a common activity as well as a chance for everyday socialization with children. Our research has shown that children who were more exposed to storytelling as well as various activities related to content of the stories show a larger number and larger variation in forms of prosocial behaviour, which is related to later success in different aspects of life.

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USING PROJECT-BASED LEARNING TO PROMOTE SCHOOL READINESS: THE CASE OF DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

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Abstract

Current research shows that the early years are crucial to future success in school and career. As educators, we know that high-quality pre-school programs can give disadvantaged children the necessary propulsion to succeed in elementary school and beyond. Children's educational outcome is one of the key areas influenced by family income. Children from low-income families often start school behind in terms of performance in relation to their peers from more affluent families, as shown in measures of school readiness. This paper suggests curriculum must be strengthened through the implementation of early high-quality intervention, in order to combat those factors that threaten disadvantaged children's development. Results of international interventions have shown that the effects of poverty can be counter balanced using sustainable interventions that provide academic, social and community support to raise the performance of disadvantaged children. The absence of identifiable systematic research in Greece, in these areas, purred us to investigate the causal link between specific instructional practices and student school-readiness-related outcomes. In an effort to address the need for additional research in this area, the purpose of this qualitative study is to assess the effects of a project-based learning (PjBL) environment on disadvantaged children with regard to school readiness. Data was collected by kindergarten teachers using curriculum-bases assessment rubrics from two kindergartens in order to compare outcomes stemming from a kindergarten utilizing traditional teaching methodologies with those of a kindergarten using PjBL as the main mode of instructional delivery. Findings suggest that the use of PjBL had a resounding positive impact on outcomes of disadvantaged children by the end of the school year. In conclusion, we argue that more resources should be directed into promoting kindergarten programs which will support better the development and the learning process of children with widely-varying strengths and weaknesses.

Key words: *disadvantaged children; instructional-intervention; project-based learning; school readiness.*

Introduction

The Ambiguous Concept of School Readiness

The concept of "school readiness" has a number of different understandings and interpretations in the context of early childhood education practice. One common nativist view of readiness holds that children are ready to start school when they reach a level of maturity that enables them to sit quietly, focus on work, engage with their peers in socially acceptable ways, and accept direction from adults (Meisels, 1998). In contrast to the idealist view, an empiricist conception (environmental) of readiness defines readiness entirely in terms of the practical characteristics of the child's behaviors and focuses on the external evidence of learning. A different approach emerges from the perspective that takes seriously the basic relativity that characterizes readiness among young children. This view rejects the notion that readiness is something within the child (idealism) or something absolute and external to the child against which the child must be evaluated (empiricism (Meisels, 1998)). Rather, this perspective sees readiness in social and cultural terms. Readiness is "a set of ideas or meanings constructed by people in communities, families, and schools as they participate in the kindergarten experience. These ideas come out of community values and expectations and are related to individual children in terms of attributes like their age, sex, and preschool experience" (Graue, 1992, p. 226).

This view shifts the focus of assessment away from the child to the community in which the child is living. Specifically, perceptions of teachers, parents, and others regarding a child's readiness become the foreground for this discussion. Love (1995) notes that "Developmental status by itself does not determine readiness because the skills and abilities necessary for school success may vary substantially from one school to another, or even from one classroom to another within a school. For a given set of school expectations, there can even be considerable variation in the specific skills and abilities that lead to successful school performance" (Love, 1995, p. 1). Because of these factors, the typical readiness definition provides little or no guidance about how to resolve differences that are found among communities, schools, or even classrooms.

The final perspective on school readiness can be described as interactionist. It focuses on children's learning and on schools' capacities to meet the individual needs of their students. This view holds that readiness is a relational, interactional construct reflecting a joint focus on the child's status and the characteristics of the educational setting. Readiness is not something we wait for, and it is not something we impose. It is not a within-the-child phenomenon, nor something specifically outside the child. Rather, it is the product of a set of educational decisions that are differentially shaped by the skills, experiences, and learning opportunities the child has had and the perspectives and goals of the community, classroom, and teacher (Meisels, 1998).

Consequently, school readiness is recognized as a multifaceted construct, referring to the match between the child and the institutions that serve the child (Scott-Little, Kagan, & Stebbins - Frelow, 2006). In other words, readiness is no longer mainly seen as a condition of the child. It is also being seen as a condition of families, of schools, and of communities (Woodhead & Moss, 2007).

The Impact of Poverty on Educational Outcomes: Defining the Challenge

The connection between kindergarten readiness and subsequent school success is extensively documented by educational researchers and widely acknowledged by educators, child development experts, health care providers, employers, public policy analysts, the media and parents. Yet, many children face deficiencies in the years leading up to school entry in terms of emotional support, intellectual stimulation, or access to resources — due to low income or other factors — that can impede their ability to develop to their fullest potential.

Economically disadvantaged children enter school with less developed cognitive skills than their peers. Also, they receive lower grades and test scores, take lower level course work, and ultimately obtain fewer degrees (Barker & Coley, 2007; Duncan, Yeung, Brooks-Gunn, & Smith, 1998; Gershoff, Aber, & Raver, 2003; Peters & Mullis, 1997). Thus, economic disadvantage can derail the trajectories of educational attainment on which long-term socioeconomic attainment is predicated.

Poverty has been shown to be particularly detrimental in early childhood in terms of children's subsequent educational and other life course outcomes. This early indicator of disadvantage, which affects as many as one of every five children, has implications for how prepared children are when they first enter school at kindergarten. While there is no single definition of school readiness, experts agree that readiness is a multifaceted concept that goes beyond academic and cognitive skills to include physical, social, and emotional development, as well as approaches to learning.

Data that follow children over time reveal that these early differences expand as children progress through school. In other words, disadvantaged children do not progress at the same rate as their more advantaged peers, so achievement gaps tend to widen over time. As a result, many children from disadvantaged backgrounds fail to meet grade-level expectations on core subjects.

Research results show that about 50% of children from at-risk backgrounds (e.g., low family income) score below the "basic" level of reading and math achievement, indicating that they have less than partial mastery of the knowledge and skills "fundamental for proficient work" at that grade level. Other manifestations of problems in school achievement for disadvantaged children include higher rates of special education placement, grade repetition, and dropping out of school.

Overcoming the Effects of Poverty by Early Learning Programs

The negative effects of poverty on all levels of school success have been widely demonstrated and accepted; the critical question for us, as educators, is: Can these effects be reversed? A potential avenue for improving school readiness among young children at risk for school failure is through early childhood education (Hayes, 2008). Studies showed that the effects of poverty can be counterbalanced by using sustainable interventions that provide academic, social and community support in order to raise the performance of disadvantaged-children. Exposure to an early learning program in the year before school entry has a positive effect on children's school readiness (Sammons, 2010; Sylva, Chan, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2010; Wong, Gardiner, Lang, & Coulon, 2008). Higher quality programs provide greater benefits for children's social, emotional, and learning outcomes, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. If learning begets learning, then interventions at younger ages have great potential to generate cumulative benefits by altering a child's future developmental trajectory. Even if only a portion of the detrimental consequences facing at-risk children in the school-age years and in adulthood can be averted, the benefits from effective early intervention programs can be substantial. Recently, the emphasis upon "educational interventions" focused on the interactionist model of school readiness. This model is not viewed as strictly individualistic (created in response to a child's unique set of skills, experiences, accomplishments, or needs), nor as "one size fits all." Instead, the interactionist view assumes a set of clear and explicit standards that admit a range of continua in their realization. Teachers apply these standards through documenting children's performance in school, evaluating that performance in relationship to external standards, formulating plans for working with children based on this information, and then repeating the process of documentation and evaluation over time based on cumulative experiences. In this manner, the central axes in the readiness equation — the child and the educational environment — are mutually altered and transformed (Meisels, 1998).

Project-based Learning (PjBL): A Possible Relationship between Early Childhood and Compulsory School Education

As researchers and educators as well, we meditate on what can we do in a country which lives in a continuous economic crisis. We understand that the possibility to implement state funded intervention programs is impossible. Under this situation the solution is to focus on more effective teaching methods and strategies like PjBL as it makes a positive impact on the readiness for school of economically disadvantaged students (Creghan, & Adair-Creghan, 2015). The challenge in this case is to ensure curriculum and pedagogy more adapted to the interests, abilities and prior experiences of children,

including respect for their age, culture and individuality. It is necessaire to introduce alternative teaching methods and strategies like PjBL and differentiating learning that can build a "strong and equal relationships" (Woodhead, & Moss, 2007) between child, home, schools and community.

The kindergarten curriculum in Greece is part of the three-volume national curriculum framework (Cross-thematic Curriculum Framework Syllabus Design, hereafter referred to as CTC, MoE/PI 2003) for all grades and subject areas of the compulsory education. By being included in the unified planning of the curriculum, early childhood education was granted equal status with the other rungs of the educational system. This strong relationship with the compulsory education seems to reinforce the schoolification of early childhood education. But at the other side, it represents a model of a pedagogy based on socio-constructivism, that introduces the cross-curricular approach to knowledge and new child-centered methods, like project work and team work, differentiating learning, documentation and assessment etc. In this approach, child is viewed as having rights, being an active constructor of knowledge and a social being, and the teacher is viewed as a collaborator and co-learner with the child, whose role is to guide, facilitate and encourage research. The implementation of a 'pedagogy of listening' respects the efforts of children to make meaning of their experience, and challenges the notion of education as preparation for school (Rinaldi, 2006). The primary method through which children learn is collaborative project work - by working together on a 'venture', they jointly construct knowledge, building up increasingly complex understandings of their chosen themes. The issue of didactic approaches, teaching and learning methods has been an important focus in education policies at early childhood programs. Planning and organizing the kindergarten's learning environment, kindergarten teachers take into account children's experiences to make sure learning programs meet their potential and understand which teaching and learning methods work best for their children, considering the student-centered pedagogy as a semantic parameter in the learning and teaching process. Many research findings indicate the significance of the PjBL as a meaningful way that enhances the kindergarten program, children's skills and educator's professionalism (Alacapınar, 2008; Hertzog, 2007; Yuen-ling, 2012).

According to modern pedagogy, PjBL is applied in any educational level and focuses on the procedure of deep learning through the inquiry method (Bell, 2010; Kokotsaki, Menzies, & Wiggins, 2016). In the Project Teaching Approach, learning content is not defined by the curriculum, but can be determined by children's cognitive needs or questions, concerns and interests, combining the learning process and the presentation of an end product. PjBL emphasizes children's skills such as collaboration, critical thinking, real-world issues research and problem solving acknowledging the significance of the authenticity in the preschool setting. More specifically, PjBL means that early childhood educators build opportunities for children to interact with their environment, design their inquiries, develop their ideas, plan their learning and construct their knowledge (Harris-Helm & Katz, 2016).

The issue of the implementation of the PjBL in the first school years has been identified by the researchers to a considerable extent as an essential strategy that benefits children a lot. PjBL can be defined as a pedagogical approach that requires teachers and children to work collaboratively in order to solve authentic and challenging problems guided by a driving question (Bell, 2010; Bender, 2012; Harris-Helm & Katz, 2016; Larmer, Mergendoller, & Boss, 2015; Markham, 2011). Children are encouraged to explore a realistic problem that interests them, design the process for reaching a solution and finally demonstrate their new acquired knowledge to products they developed (Harris-Helm & Katz, 2016).

A project-based learning environment has several characteristics that can be identified as key features of this instructional approach. The main principles of PjBL, which are identified in many research studies, include: (a) the child-centered environment for students, (b) the active role children play in acquisition of knowledge, (c) the children's involvement in a constructive research through inquiry, decision-making and resolution, (d) the use of real-world problems, (e) the development of collaborative and metacognition skills, (f) the use of assessment practices continuously, (g) the emphasis on interdisciplinary and holistic approach of knowledge, and (h) the use of multiple presentation modes to display children's knowledge (Bellanca, 2010; Diffily & Sassman, 2002; Markham, Larmer, & Ravitz, 2003).

Generally, implementing PjBL with preschoolers, can be based on the following stages. First is the planning stage. In this phase, children make decisions what they will work on. With the teacher's guidance, they design the process and share responsibilities organizing tasks and appropriate activities. Next stage is the implementation of the project. At this phase, the kindergarten teacher with children review the whole process, locate resources and create collectively a project time line. Thus, children become researchers gathering information for reaching a solution and they report what they found through drawings, pictures, crafts, graphs, written notes. The last one is the concluding stage. Children discuss the evidence they have found, obtain feedback and reflection through assessment practices, form a conclusion based on the data collected and finally share their final report with larger groups, other classes, in the community or with family (Bell, 2010; Thomas, 2000).

Simultaneously, significant emphasis is placed on the teachers' role during PjBL. Research indicates some essential dimensions: consultant, facilitator and counselor. First of all, educators must know their learners' interests and needs in order to facilitate the project based learning. In parallel, they play the role of a consultant as they help and guide children to formulate their project objectives, giving them advices, support and feedback. As children make choices and work collectively, teachers play the role of a facilitator. In PjBL, teachers are followers of children's needs and must be able to facilitate thinking, growth and engagement. A number of authors have pointed out that with less teacher supervision, PjBL motivates students to make important movements in developing ownership for the overall procedure (Larmer, Ross & Mergendoller, 2009; Solomon, 2003).

Multiple research studies have found many levels of effectiveness in project-based learning classrooms. The most significant benefits of PjBL are the collaborative activities among children, the development of critical thinking and the active role of children in acquisition of knowledge (Gultekin, 2005). Bell (2010) has emphasized the PjBL "as a key strategy for creating independent thinkers and learners" (p. 39). Children are supported to use higher order thinking skills by making in-depth research and by engaging in authentic learning through inquiry, collaboration and solving real-world problems (David, 2008; Donnelly & Fitzmaurice, 2005; Holm, 2011; Newman, 1996).

The literature also suggests and supports that PjBL has many positive effects on children's content knowledge. In project-based learning classrooms children acquire and retain useful and real-world content knowledge finding meaningful connections to their own interests and needs (Harris-Helm & Katz, 2016). Additionally, children can increase their motivation as they feel actively engaged in their own learning by producing important works in the context of an appropriate learning environment (Blumenfeld, Soloway, Marx, Krajcik, Guzdial, & Palincsar, 1991; Thomas, 2000). According to Barell (2008), children enhance their vocabulary knowledge, cognitive achievement and development of process skills. Research also points to some positive effects of PjBL with regard to the development of self-management skills such as self-regulation and self-confidence (Bell, 2010; Kaldi, Filippatou, & Govaris, 2011).

With PjBL, children learn to be organized in teams and to share common thoughts, ideas and decisions by developing positive communication skills. Applying PjBL in the classroom may be encouraging for some weak or hesitant children who are less active in group works. By developing a cooperative climate and a pleasant classroom atmosphere, through PjBL, children expand their long-term relationships and increase their imagination, creativity and innovation management (Clark, 2000; Katz & Chard, 2000). Also, learning in a project based environment involves children, teachers and parents. Many studies revealed that collaboration between the stakeholders is effective on children's learning and personal development in early childhood (Katz & Chard, 2000; Markham, 2011).

Lastly, PjBL enables students to be active learners. Children with teachers' guidance take charge, make decisions, think critically, create, collaborate and develop products that demonstrate their effective learning. There is no limit to how far children can proceed as project-based learning approach supports to a great extent the children's active engagement in this authentic procedure and puts learning into action (Clark, 2000; Harris-Helm & Beneke, 2003; Harris-Helm & Katz, 2016).

Helm and Beneke (2003) in their book *The power of projects: Meeting contemporary challenges in early childhood classrooms-Strategies & solutions,* conclude that "carefully facilitation of project work supports the development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions to achieve in school and provide opportunities for children to develop positive self-esteem and resilience" (p. 24).

Findings from the study of Beneke and Ostrosky (2009) reveal that the teachers had positive perceptions of the effectiveness of the Project Approach as a way to teach diverse learners. They believed that learning the approach helped them to better include diverse learners, to motivate children toward increased academic and social skills, to bring children into the project planning, and to enable children to interact with project-related "real objects" in the classroom.

A General Overview of the Evidence for the Effectiveness of PjBL

PjBL has been explored in various contexts and in different phases of schooling, from primary to higher education. The majority of the reviewed studies were based on a quasi-experimental pretest–posttest design with some baseline equivalence established but no random allocation of participants to control and experimental groups, and as a result, a causal link between PBjL instruction and positive student outcomes cannot be established with certainty. Many parameters have been identified in the literature as facilitating factors in the implementation of PjBL, such as: the modern digital technology, the group processes of high quality, the teachers' ability to scaffold students' learning in an effective way and provide guidance and support, the balance between didactic instruction with in-depth inquiry methods and well-aligned assessment (Kokotsaki, Menzies, & Wiggins, 2016).

In the light of the survey findings, the implementation of PjBL in preschool and primary education had positive effects including: (a) the collaboration among children, (b) the development of critical thinking and the active role of children in acquisition of knowledge in 21st century skills, (c) the kindergarten children's experiential reasoning and comprehension of relations in content knowledge and group work skills, (d) the motivation and positive attitudes towards peers from a different ethnic background, in state-mandated curriculum objectives, in social studies and literacy for 2nd grade students.

Methods

The Purpose of the Study

This study focused on the effectiveness of PjBL in Greek kindergartens with high rates of economically disadvantaged students. Since past research studies have focused on the overall effectiveness of PjBL rather than addressing specific children's readiness concerns of economically disadvantaged students, the effects of PjBL on these students are largely unknown. The absence of identifiable systematic research in Greece in this area spurred the researchers to investigate the causal link between specific instructional practices and children's school-readiness-related outcomes. Also, there is no clear and

consistent targeting strategy for early intervention and school-based programs aimed at mitigating the effects of poverty on children's readiness for school and their ability to learn. In 2014, according to UNICEF's report 25.3% of children lived in poverty in Greece.

On the basis of the literature review and in an effort to address the need for additional research in this area, the purpose of this study was to assess the effects of a project-based learning (PjBL) environment on economically disadvantaged children with regard to their readiness for school.

In order to specify the effectiveness of a project-based learning (PjBL) environment on economically disadvantaged children with regard to school readiness, the following research question guided this study: Are there statistically significant differences in school readiness outcomes of economically disadvantaged children in a PjBL environment as compared to a traditional learning environment?

The findings of the study will inform other Kindergarten programs that are interested in implementing the Project approach by following successful practices as well as addressing the challenges highlighted in this work.

Study Design

In the present study, a pre-test post-test control group of quasi-experimental research design was used during the implementation of an Action Research Transition Program. Pretest-posttest designs constitute the preferred method to compare participant groups and measure the degree of change occurring as a result of interventions (Bryman, 2016; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2008).

The key variables in the present research were defined as follows: (a) the project method was defined as an independent variable, (b) the preschool child's readiness for primary school in the learning domains of socio-emotional development, language, mathematics, environment, creativity-expression and I.C.T. was defined as a dependent variable, (c) the child's gender and some family characteristics were also considered as independent variables.

Description of Sample

The sample of the research consisted of kindergarten children (N=145) who were enrolled in two public urban kindergartens of a disadvantaged neighborhood in the prefecture of Voiotia (Central Greece Region) during the school year 2013-2014. Both kindergartens participated willingly in the approved by the Greek Ministry of Education educational research program entitled "Facilitating the Smooth Transition of Children from Kindergarten to Primary School". The characteristics of the sample are described in Table 1.

Table 1 *General Sample Characteristics*

Teaching method	Sample size	%	Family characteristics	Sample size	%	Gender	Sample size	%
Treatment Group, Project-approach	79	45.5%	Economically Disadvantaged children	36	24.01%	Male	62	42.8%
Control Group, Traditional-approach	66	54.5%	Economically Advantaged children	109	75.99%	Female	83	57.2%
Total	145	100.0%	Total	145	100.0%	Total	145	100.0%

Specifically, it seems that 24.01% of the sample belongs to the category of children coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, whereas 75.99% of the sample belongs to the advantaged category group. Furthermore, 42.8% of the sample are boys, whereas 57.2% of the sample are girls. Moreover, 66 children (54.5%) constitute the Control Group, where there was no differentiation of the educational program, whereas 79 children (45.5%) constitute the Treatment Group, where instructional intervention was applied.

Description of Research Instrument

A curriculum-based assessment rating rubric was developed together by kindergarten and primary teachers. It was based on the principles of the CTC (MoE/PI. (2003)) and was used in order to: (a) help educators to find authentic forms of assessing their children and adapt or design an appropriate assessment tool, (b) detect kindergarten children's needs and interests, (c) define children's skills and abilities in order to organize individualized interventions for preschool children or to assess each child's personal progress, and (d) collect useful information as a data base in order to define the degree of accomplished state demands regards the preschool children's development and learning.

The production of the aforementioned rating rubric scale was completely carried out by the kindergarten and primary school teachers, who were both collaborators and participants in the educational research program "Facilitating the Transition of Preschool Children to Primary School" under the supervision and collaboration with the coordinator of the educational research program. Specifically, the educators, in the context of the action research on which the program was based, manifested by a 'strong and equal

partnership' (Moss, 2013) between them, children and parents, framed their need to monitor the progress of preschool children throughout the school year in order to: (a) share information about the children`s development with their parents, (b) make instructional design decisions concerning the improvement and revision of educational practices so that they can respond effectively to children`s needs, (c) converse in a level of professional development concerning the effectiveness of their work, and, (d) assess the outcome of the present program.

The creation of the research instrument lasted one year, during which kindergarten and primary school teachers had the opportunity to attend generally training courses concerning the issue of curriculums and their progress, the assessment of children and specifically the issue of rating rubric scale technique. Also, kindergarten teachers, who were involved in the experimental group, received additional training on the issue of project-based approach. At the end of each educational meeting, kindergarten and primary school teachers have worked in groups on a specific learning domain of the curriculum, in order to gain a better understanding of the research tool's structure. In the meantime, they had the chance to implement the research tool on a trial basis, to assess its potential and weaknesses and to share their experience in plenary session of groups.

The specific rating rubric consists of six developmental learning domains, according to the Cross-Thematic Curriculum Framework, which are as follows: Personal and Social Development, Skills of Speaking, Reading, Writing, Composition (Language), Mathematics, Artificial and Natural Environment, Creativity-expression and Computer Science (I.C.T.). Each developmental learning domain contains a table of four columns. The intended skills are mentioned in the first column, whereas three different ratings are mentioned in the remaining three columns, according to the achievement degree of the intended capacity. More specifically, in the second column of the developmental learning domain, the rating 'Yes' is referred, in the third column, the rating 'Partly' is referred, whereas in the fourth column, the rating 'Not yet' is mentioned.

Also, below the table of each developmental learning domain, there are four options concerning the evidence sources which were used to assess each child`s progress. Kindergarten and primary school teachers had to note down a tick or a cross (v/x), taking into consideration the following options: remarks made by the educator, the child`s portfolio, parents' information or other. In parallel, at the end of each learning domain, there is yet another one table concerning the children`s progress holistically in each domain of development, either accumulatively or individually. Ultimately, in the last page of the research tool, both educators and parents can express their views about the child's progress.

Data Collection and Analysis

In this paper, we analyze only the data that was collected by kindergarten teachers at the beginning as well as at the end of the school year 2013-2014, just before children graduated from kindergarten. More specifically, the teachers of each kindergarten class recorded the level at which children had achieved the proposed by CTC skills of developmental learning domains by filling in accordingly one of the three rating levels of the assessment rubric.

Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used in order to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the children's readiness rates of the two schools. Mann and Whitney test was used to determine if there was a significant difference between the two independent groups. The statistical significance level (p-value) in this study was set at the .05 level. The data analysis was performed by using SPSS 21.0, statistical software for Windows.

Results

For the purpose of validating the effectiveness of a project-based learning (PjBL) environment on economically disadvantaged children with regard to child's readiness, the variables "children's gender" and "family characteristics" were tested. Table 2 presents the comparison of averages of both groups for the variable "children's gender" in pre-test control group.

Table 2.*Comparison of averages (Mann and Whitney) of both groups for the variable "children's gender"*

Learning domains	Gender	n	Mean	SD	p-value
Personal and social development	Male	62	.03222	1.041248	0.661
	Female	83	-.02407	.973750	
Language	Male	62	-.00742	.976528	0.222
	Female	83	.00554	1.023051	
Mathematics	Male	62	.04200	1.011024	0.555
	Female	83	-.03137	.996681	
Environment	Male	62	-.00743	.947931	0.808
	Female	83	.00555	1.042868	

Creativity-expression	Male	62	.07822	1.046432	0.325
	Female	83	-.05843	.966140	
I.C.T.	Male	62	-.00742	.976528	0.723
	Female	83	.00554	1.023051	

As it can be seen in Table 2, it is clear that at the beginning of the school year and before the start of the teaching intervention, gender as a factor of differentiation, does not affect neither positively nor negatively the performance of children.

Unlike the factor family characteristics, the learning domains of personal and social development, language, mathematics, creativity-expression, and I.C.T. are positively affected. According to Table 3, children who came from privileged families appeared to have a higher degree of learning readiness in relation to children who come from disadvantaged families in the learning domains of personal and social development (0.38780, p-value= 0.003), language (.46958, p-value= 0.002), mathematics (.50356, p-value=0.001), creativity-expression (.75821, p-value=0.001), and I.C.T. (.46958, p-value=0.002). Table 3 shows the comparison of averages of both groups for the variable "family characteristics" in pre-test control group.

Table 3.*Comparison of averages (Mann and Whitney Test) of both groups for the variable "family characteristics" in Pre-Test*

Learning domains	Children's characteristics	n	Mean	SD	p-value
Personal and social development	Advantaged children	109	0.38780	.689425	**0.003***
	Disadvantaged children	36	-.17451	1.069663	
Language	Advantaged children	109	.46958	.604443	**0.002***
	Disadvantaged children	36	-.21131	1.070904	
Mathematics	Advantaged children	109	.50356	.542598	**0.001***
	Disadvantaged children	36	-.22660	1.075438	
Environment	Advantaged children	109	.05172	.590161	0.657

	Disadvantaged children	36	-.02327	1.139292	
Creativity-expression	Advantaged children	109	.75821	.666758	**0.001***
	Disadvantaged children	36	-.34119	.937049	
I.C.T.	Advantaged children	109	.46958	.604443	**0.002***
	Disadvantaged children	36	-.21131	1.070904	

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned findings, a comparison of the averages of the two groups (experimental and control) was carried out in relation to the child's readiness variables. Table 4 presents the comparison of averages of the two groups concerning the child's readiness after the implementation of the intervention with the project method.

Table 4 *Comparison of averages (Mann and Whitney Test) of the two groups in relation to the child's readiness variables in Post-Test*

Learning domains	Teaching approach	n	Mean	SD	p-value
Personal and social development	Project	66	.32566	.795175	**0.0001***
	Traditional	79	-.27207	1.074490	
Language	Project	66	.29505	.642946	**0.0011***
	Traditional	79	-.24650	1.168960	
Mathematics	Project	66	.15787	.625865	0.2220
	Traditional	79	-.13189	1.216974	
Environment	Project	66	.32198	1.042189	**0.0001***
	Traditional	79	-.26899	.883185	
Expression-creativity	Project	66	.39807	.933845	**0.0020***
	Traditional	79	-.33256	.934525	
I.C.T.	Project	66	.26338	.914766	0.9121
	Traditional	79	-.22004	1.020336	

Process and analysis of data obtained from the factor analysis of post-test, as easily perceived from Table 4, showed a statistically significant difference in four learning domains and with positive results benefiting the investigation group. The learning areas that have a statistically significant difference, according to Table 4, are as follows: (a) personal and social development ($p < 0.0001$), (b) language ($p < 0.0011$), (c) environment ($p < 0.0001$), and, (d) expression and creativity ($p < 0.0020$).

Discussion and Conclusions

The aim of the present study was to explore the possible impact and the effects of a project-based learning (PjBL) environment on economically disadvantaged children with regard to their readiness for school. Taking into consideration the findings of the conducted research, it is revealed that the readiness level of disadvantaged children was positively impacted by utilizing the instructional methodology of PjBL.

Consistent with previous work in this area, the present study shows that project work although it is a pedagogical method that does not follow predetermined objectives, however, can be used to meet state-mandated curriculum objectives. Other educators (Helm & Gronlund, 2000; Schuler, 2000) have demonstrated that standards can easily be met using the project approach. These results reveal the potential of the project approach as an efficient way of meeting the demands and requirements imposed on today's classrooms with children living in poverty.

The specific method of project affects positively, with a statistically significant difference, the disadvantaged children's developmental learning domains, such as personal and social development, language, environment, and expression and creativity. PjBL has no adverse effects on any aspect of child development.

The fact that children from underprivileged families appear to outweigh in the development of their personality, at the beginning of the experiment, compared to the children living in poverty, leads us to the conclusion that the pedagogical scientific knowledge is socially dependent (Bernstein, 1991).

All children, at all ages, are 'ready to learn' and have been doing so since birth. Recent research using new techniques in cognitive neuroscience and developmental psychology has established that many of our cognitive processes are there and fully functioning at birth, or mature very quickly during the first 4-5 years of life. So, the significant question is not whether a child is ready to learn but what a child is ready to learn and how adults can best support the processes of learning. Their pleasure in using what Reggio Emilia calls 'the hundred languages of children' (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1995) needs to be nurtured, and can be channeled towards readiness for school, without undue pressure to achieve a pre-specified level of knowledge or proficiency at a given age.

Recommendations

In general, as educators, a major focus in evaluating instructional delivery methods should be the impact of our instruction on the success of our students. In this light, we might consider the founding principles of PjBL methodology in providing relevant, learner-centered experiences for all children. Although implementing a PjBL environment requires ongoing training and support for teachers to be able to integrate PjBL methodologies within complex educational content, required by state and national standards, PjBL may increase student interest and engagement in school environment. This study constitutes another one step in determining the impact of PjBL on students from poverty. Future research and further studies are needed to replicate the results of this study in other environments, and additionally to attempt to eliminate other external variables from consideration in raising attendance rates for economically disadvantaged students. More specifically, future research could include a larger sample of kindergarten and primary schools and extent potentially children's school readiness by the end of third grade.

Limitations

While this study extends the literature, it is important to discuss the limitations. First, the number of participants was small, and while the results indicate positive effects of the PA, a larger sample size could provide more insight into the impact of the PA on students with diverse abilities. Importantly, while behavioral changes were observed, causal relationships cannot be inferred. Also, an analysis of the impact of the PA on children with more demographic factors (e.g., socioeconomic status, type of disability) was not conducted, but rather more general descriptors were used (e.g., children with disabilities, at-risk students). This limits the generalizability of the findings.

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ADDRESSING A PARENTING ISSUE IN CHINESE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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Abstract

With the economic development and rapid internationalization in China, there are tremendous changes in parenting beliefs of many parents, particularly in recent 10 years. They believe that there is much to learn from Western developed countries in regarding to early childhood education, which is significantly different from that of traditional Chinese education. However, most of them lack reliable sources of related knowledge. Meanwhile, the impact of traditional Chinese culture and educational concepts is still deeply rooted. It confuses the parents and even misleads them about appropriate parenting practices, which in turn causes challenges for early childhood education institutions. In order to address this issue, author and her team launched a Parent Education and Support Program in EyasKids Learning Academy in Wuhan, China. The program offers parents systematic training in a variety of forms for improving their parenting knowledge and skills, and personalizes the guidance via continuous monitoring and assessment of each child's development in important domains and one-on-one consultation. The parents in the program not only made significant improvements in their parenting beliefs, attitude & practices but also became more cooperative with teachers and confident on decision making.

Key words: parenting beliefs; parent education; child development; collaboration; positive relationship.

Introduction: Background of the Chinese children education

China is an ancient country with a history of around 5,000 years. It has a unique educational tradition and system which is formed in the history of thousand years. In traditional Chinese education, elders and teachers are portrayed as an unquestionable image of the authority. Children unilaterally accept inculcated knowledge and view (Chang & Lyu, 2015), which is called authoritarian style today.

In the first half of the 20th century, with the spread of Western culture and thoughts in China, Western educational philosophy was introduced to China which advocates mutual respect and child-oriented. A lot of theorists and educators were impressed by the new view of children and developed their educational philosophy and practice guidelines based on it. Yuanpei Cai, Xingzhi Tao and Heqin Chen are representatives of them (Zhou, 2003, p.38-40). These theories formed the main part of the theoretical foundation of Chinese modern education and played important roles in guiding educational innovation of China in the second half of the 20th century. They impacted Chinese educational theorists and part of practitioners, but not parents due to strong influence of Chinese culture and traditional education.

In the 1980s, due to the improvement on quality of life and education, "one child" policy, fierce social competition and other reasons, children education in China has been raised to the extent of never been more important. Chinese parents' parenting style was altered from traditional authoritarian to a mixture of permissive and authoritative style (Liu, 2017, p.20). On one hand, grandparents and parents pour too much attention to their only child and treat him/her as a "little sun" or "little emperor" of the family. On the other hand, Chinese parents pay their most attention to the children education which is rarely seen in many cultures, and children bear a very heavy burden of unrealistic expectations on their academic performance since they were very young.

Meanwhile, there are also issues about the setting of early childhood education curriculum in Chinese higher institutions. The frontline preschool teachers are mainly from colleges which focus more on artistic skills than early childhood education theoretic knowledge which should be the most important, while the educators who graduate from universities with stronger early childhood education background rarely work as preschool teachers in child care settings, since importance of this occupation is seriously under-estimated. The huge gap between theory and practice leads to difficulties in providing high quality early childhood education in China.

Fortunately, entering the 21st century, most new generation parents are well educated. Their acceptance of Western modern and mature early education concept is increasing, more and more of them begin to realize the importance of whole child education. But they lack the reliable way to get the scientific parenting knowledge. They do not know what to do and how to do although they want to be the best they could be. The information they acquire from the Internet and popular books or magazines is often

fragmented, inaccurate, and even contradictory, which in turn confuses the young parents. In addition, a considerable part of children are taken care of by their grandparents. They usually lack knowledge of modern children education much more than parents. Influenced by the slogan "do not let the children lose at the starting line", numerous parents invest a lot of money, time, and energy in preparing their children for the future competition as early as possible. However, the slogan is gratuitous, unsupported by any scientific research, and may mislead several generations (Wen, 2011). The need for systematic and scientific parent education is quite urgent.

Situation of Parent Education in China

The idea of parent education has been advocated in Western society since 1930s. Parent Education has been defined as: "programs, support services and resources offered to parents and caregivers that are designed to support them or increase their capacity and confidence in raising healthy children" (Carter & Kahn, 1996).

In Western developed countries, there are a variety of mature and effective parent education programs are offered to millions of parents. Best programs included STAR Parenting, Strengthening Families Program for Parents and Youth 10-14, Systematic Training for Effective Parenting, and Triple P-Positive Parenting Program, etc (Collins & Fetsch, 2012).

While in the mainland China, there is still a lack of systematically planned and ongoing parent education program offered to parents. Although thoughts related to parenting in traditional Chinese culture can be traced back to 2000 years ago, they almost have not been systematically developed and are very different from philosophy of modern parenting. Even up until now, the importance of parent education still has not been widely recognized (Tian, 2011, p.2-3) due to a lot of factors.

In a paper which goes deep into this issue, analysis shows that there are 8 mainly factors that affect the effectiveness of preschool parent education in China (Tian, 2011, p.42-47).

1) Parents have not paid enough attention to parent education.
2) Parents have not had a clear idea about their role and responsibilities.
3) Planners and implementers of parent education program are not highly responsive to parents' needs.
4) Planners and implementers of parent education program neglect characteristics of adult learners.
5) Planners and implementers focus on parenting knowledge but neglect the application.
6) Planners and implementers have not provided sufficient targeted guidance for different types of

parents.

7) Lack of professional guidance and professionals.

8) Lack of the necessary social services for supporting and promoting parents well-being on a variety of levels.

Although the theorists and researchers recognize it, it is difficult to make big changes in the field of Chinese early childhood education, which is the biggest early childhood education system in the world. In many families, child raising is still treated as a private family affair; the experts in social organizations or institutions are not sufficient to offer the planning and practice of parent education; The attitude to parent education and related knowledge and skills are rarely incorporated into the relevant curriculum by higher education institution which leads to Chinese preschool teachers lack of training on working with family; parenting skills spread by social mass media are also less systematic and continuous. In short, in the mainland China, although young parents realize the issues on their parenting and try to improve, lack of systematic parent education program block their way to developing scientific parenting attitude and behaviors. The systematic and in-depth study of relevant theoretical and practical problems is far from enough (Tian, 2011, p.2-3).

Characteristics of Modern Parent Education and Its Development Trends

Throughout the history of modern parent education, the changes in content of parent education program can be traced from the emergence of first schools for Mothers focused on informing parents in the field of hygiene and health issues, to the emergence of parenting training for the development of parental competencies and skills (Polivanova, Vopilova, & Nisskaya, 2016). After performing in-depth interviews with many mothers of young children, Barlow (Rena & Joanne, 2008, p.232) concludes that the involvement of so-called experts in child-rearing and largely providing "instructions" has undermined parents' beliefs in their own ability to raise their children since "experts" try to communicate knowledge to parents but parent are left out of the decision making process. This make parents come to feel that they are being judged as unable to make good decisions (Camwath & Miller, 1986, p.232).

A trend from the 2000s in the development of modern parent education program is the transition from programs aimed at informing parents and development of certain skills, to programs aimed at the parent's identity, his or her experience, beliefs and perceptions, confidence and anxiety. The concept of parental self-efficacy has become more and more popular recently years in the scientific literature. It refers to parent's belief that he or she will be able to cope with child rearing tasks (Polivanova et al., 2016, p.9-10). "A positive relationship between the level of parental self-efficacy and especially, maternal self-efficacy and educational practices have been shown in several studies" (Polivanova et al., 2016, p.10). "Parents with a higher self-efficacy are more likely to use positive parenting practices - sensitivity, responsiveness,

stimulating and non-punitive parenting " (Bohlin & Hagekull, 1987). Therefore, choosing this concept as the methodological basis for designing parenting programs is becoming into a trend.

There is a consensus that successful parent education programs share the following characteristics (Couchenour & Chrisman, 2000).

1)   They are intensive and extensive.
2)   They are conceptualized and implemented under highly qualified professionals in the field of early childhood development.
3)   They respond to parents' needs.
4)   They are managed collaboratively.
5)   They include open-ended discussion.

Methodology of Our Proposed Parent Education and Support Program (PESP)

Parent Education and Support Program (PESP) is a parent education program offered by our kindergarten, Eyaskids Learning Academy in Wuhan, China. This program was designed to provide successful parent education program while customized to the unique needs from parents whose children are enrolled in our kindergarten.

In the field of modern early childhood education in Western developed countries, parent education is not a critical issue. There are already some effective and widely accepted theories and methods in analyzing and solving relevant problems as described in the last chapter.

However, situation is much different in China because of some factors, such as the unique Eastern culture, Chinese history, traditional education, economic development level and social situation, etc. It makes some difficulties in applying methodology of Western parent education to Chinese parents without special adaptations.

There are three major critical factors which hinder Chinese parents from accepting modern educational beliefs and putting into practice:

1) Profound cultural imprint. More than 90% Chinese young parents grew up in traditional culture. Educational practices in most Chinese kindergartens at that time were primarily based on traditional education when young parents were at their childhood, thus not consistent with philosophy of modern early childhood education. Many of them have few concepts. In contrast, the ways in which Western parents raise their child is very similar to those they were raised. The problems and confusion on parents caused by the great difference between traditional experience-based

education and modern education are far beyond their Western peers and not fully taken account into in the study of modern parent education which is dominated by Western researchers (Feng, 2013).

2) China is experiencing a great social change and economic development in the recent 30 years. Quality of people life has been greatly improved and early education has received unprecedented attention. A variety of educational philosophies derived from traditional culture or contemporary pedagogy emerging overnight. Parents fell into a dilemma of what kind of educational philosophy they are supposed to believe and choose for their child. They also encounter a lot of problems in the process of applying and practicing, but not much support available and thus get lost on the way.

3) In the past 30 years, the rapid economic development leads to more and more fierce competition in the every corner of the society which results in unrealistic expectation on children in the whole society. "To Chinese people, children are not only the bearers of DNA they are conveyers of the philosophies and values of older generations and represent the whole family". "Compared with developed countries, where educational resources are comparatively fairly distributed among the primary and secondary schools, China has huge gaps in the distribution of educational resources even in the kindergarten stage among different schools and between the rural and urban areas" (Lu, 2011). As a result, a lot of Chinese parents are experiencing high level of anxiety. It is hard for them to accept the fact that each child develops at her or his own pace, which is one of the most important principles of contemporary early childhood education. Some unrealistic expectations become widely accepted by most parents as the basic requirements for their children.

Therefore, in order to make our program more effective and efficient to the pain points and easily to be accepted by parents, we need take account of the critical factors in designing and implementing our methods used in PESP. Recognizing the profound cultural and traditional impact on the individual, the family, the community and even the whole country, we realize that PESP can't solve the fundamental problem immediately in the situation that modern early education were not accessible to parents when they were young, the availabilities of reliable resources and information is not satisfactory when they became into parents, and the relevant state regulations are not perfect because of undergoing transformation. It is difficult to make a substantial change in a short period of time. However, That doesn't mean there is nothing we can do. A famous Chinese proverb says that dripping water wears through stones, which means constant effort bring success. Therefore, we decided to take the first step.

We put a lot of efforts in the following aspects:

1) Explaining to parents our educational philosophy based on Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), especially three core considerations of DAP, to have them prepared for the upcoming

programs. DAP is defined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and has got widely recognized in the field of early childhood education. It is "an approach to teaching grounded in the research on how young children develop and learn and in what is known about effective early education" (NAEYC, 2017). We believe that parents' learning about modern educational philosophy at the very beginning is indispensable, which also helps build a foundation for collaboration between families and our kindergarten.

2) Considering traditional culture and education philosophy they have got used to, we actively looked for proper methods to promote their mastery of new knowledge and skills they would learn, try to clean up confusion and misunderstanding by continual adding follow-up comments to parents and encourage discussion. We also evaluated and fine tuned the methods timely to make the whole process adapted to Chinese traditional culture and therefore more effective.

3) Focusing on knowledge of child development and positive behavior guidance urgently needed be provided to parents, providing opportunity of putting knowledge into practice to help parents accurately understand our educational principles, increase their acceptance and thus set high but realistic expectation on children.

Based on the above, we set three stage goals for PESP as follows to carry out our ideas step by step and guide the parents to gradually achieving our desired goals:

1) Support our parents in their role as primary educator and caregiver of their child

2) Support their personal development.

3) Support them as decision makers for themselves, their children, and our program (Couchenour et al., 2000, p.230).

Our PESP program was launched from May 2016, when our kindergarten was opened and only had one age group, children from age 2 to 3. Parents/caregivers whose children have been enrolled in Eyakids Learning Academy are all welcome to participate in this program. After we introduced the PESP to parents, 32 parents were enrolled in this program (26 females and 6 males). We stated our goals and guidelines before they enrolled in to make sure they were clear about what would happen next.

This is the first time that we try to do research in parent education in our kindergarten. Parent education has not been given enough attention by Chinese education system in the history. Only few reference documents and research papers were found, so we conducted a pre-survey before the full program design to get the first-hand data in order to make PESP feasible and effective to the parents in this program.

The survey was conducted in the form of combination a questionnaire with a parent interview. The content of investigation includes the parent's educational and occupational background, the people who involve in child raising, the form of family, the sources that they acquire parenting knowledge, their comments on

previous lectures that they participated in before joining us and their needs for PESP and so on. We also examined parents' willingness to participate in parent education program, their beliefs and attitude to parenting or child development and their practices of parenting. Some parents shared their concerns and personal experiences of child raising with us and provided valuable information for our planning of PESP.

Information obtained from survey shows that:

1) 90.63% of our parents have a bachelor degree or above and in a good economical situation. They value the importance of education.

2) 34.38% children are taken care of by parents and grandparents together. There are some issues caused by the generation gap and divergence on educational concepts and practices among family members.

3) The top 3 sources for parents to acquire related parenting knowledge are: social mass media such as internet, popular books or magazines (84.38%); the experiences from relatives or friends (56.25%); referring to their own growth experience (46.88%). It indicates that the quality of information that parents acquire can't be guaranteed.

4) 65.63% of parents are not satisfied with the expert lecture they participated in before since the content is not so practical and their needs are not met.

5) 46.88% of parents are not willing to accept regular home visit. There may be two reasons: child raising is treated as a private family affair; parents are sensitive to exposure of their family privacy such as their economic situation.

6) 100% of parents have a willingness to participate in the program and involve in their child's education, but the frequency of participation preferred by most parents is twice per semester, which is lower than our expectation.

7) The Top 3 parent-preferred forms of parent education are: One-on-One Consultation 78.13%, Parent-child activities with on-site demonstration and instructions 65.63%, Group session for discussion and experiences sharing 59.38%.

In addition, the information collected from parent interviews indicates that part of parents' understanding of our educational principles is vague, which leads to some deviations from positive parenting attitude and behavior, even misunderstanding of teachers' educational practices and result in inconsistency between school and family.

Based on our research on parent education and information collected from pre-survey, PESP was planned to involve frequent contact between staff and parents in variety of forms with the purpose of guiding them towards the best they could be and facilitating growth of children, parents and teachers. Considering the characteristics of adult learners: applied, experienced, self-directed, goal-oriented, wanting to be

appreciated and respected (Whiteman & Hudson, 2000), the logical of model is composed of four components:

1) 8 Two-Hour Group Sessions

Taking account of parents' lack of related knowledge or inappropriate application of parenting skills because of misunderstanding, Two-Hour Group Sessions is designed to introduce the basic knowledge of child development and positive guidance strategies, as well as provide parents opportunities of discussing how they apply what they learn at home. It is implemented once every two weeks and last four months.

2) On-site Guidance

On-site Guidance occurs when there is a parent-child activity in our kindergarten. It is around once per month. It helps parents observe and learn how teachers give positive guidance to help children practice new skills and promote their positive behavior. Meanwhile, teachers have some insight into the way parents communicate with their children and their relationship, which to some degree makes up the lack of home visits because of parents' reluctance on home visit.

3) Child Observation Record Sharing

Child Observation Record Sharing is for parents learning about their children's learning styles and behavior patterns through continuous observation with the help of teachers. It will help parents set realistic expectations on their children, which is especially difficult for most of Chinese parents. It is planned to start after the parents finish 8 group sessions and thus have some knowledge about child development as the foundation for recording their observation of children.

4) One-on-One Consultation about Assessment of Child Development.

It is used to communicate important milestones of child development with parents, meet individual needs of each child and their family, as well as help early detection of developmental delay. The assessments occurs three times per year: September, January and June. One-on-One consultation will be conducted after we finish the assessment at the end of each semester.

To ensure the quality of program, the staff who participate in this program are highly qualified professionals in the field of early childhood development. They have some experience of working with family and have accepted related training.

Implementation of PESP

Before we implemented PESP, we firstly introduced the concept of whole child and four development domains: Language & Literacy Development, Social & Emotional Development, Cognitive Development, and Physical Development. Then we introduced some key concepts of our philosophy to parents which is based on core considerations of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (NAEYC, 2017):

- Knowing about child development and learning
- Knowing what is individually appropriate
- Knowing what is culturally important

DAP means using what you know about child development and an individual child to provide care that is just right for them while respecting the social and cultural context in which children live, which is especially important for Chinese parents because of the influence from unique Chinese culture and tradition. Although DAP is for early childhood practitioners to make good decisions for children, parents as child's first teacher and partners with teachers, it is essential for parents to learn the principles that we are following, and thus build a concrete foundation for positive communication and collaboration between parents and staff in our PESP. We don't expect parents can understand all those principles immediately, especially when a lot of parents have misconceptions about modern parenting beliefs and practice. Helping parents confront conceptual misunderstanding and construct or reconstruct a correct framework for their new knowledge is a difficult and long-term task, however, it is incumbent on us.

In order to make the program effectively empower parents gradually in the current context and achieve our goals step by step, we implemented the four components of our PESP program in a special designed order:

a) 8 Two-Hour Group Sessions

8 Two-Hour Group Sessions is the first component in PESP. Each session is divided into two parts: Part 1, Providing knowledge about parenting and discussing how they would apply the ideas in family. Part 2, Sharing experiences of applying knowledge and skills at home and discussing with other group members. The reasons that make us start from group sessions are:

1) Suitable for new parents who have never been in systematic parent education to obtain important basic information about child development and guidance strategies.
2) Parents get opportunities to apply the ideas that they learn and clear up confusions by asking questions and contributing to the group.
3) Helps parents build social connections and see others share their concerns, which in turn eases their anxiety.

The arrangement of these sessions has been designed to meet parents' priorities while introduce scientific parenting beliefs and practice gradually. The sessions start with understanding children and their behavior

through knowledge of child development, followed by a series of effective guidance strategies, and end with reviewing and summarizing all we learn from the sessions. The topic of each session is as follows:

1) Terrible 2 (child development - 2 years old).
2) Horrible 3 (child development - 3 years old).
3) Child Guidance - Help children save face and preserve their dignity.
4) Child Guidance - Set limits well.
5) Child Guidance - Identify problem ownership and mistaken goals.
6) Child Guidance - Deliver I-message.
7) Child Guidance - Use encouragement instead of vague praise.
8) Review and Summary.

32 parents were divided into 6 groups based on which class their child belongs to. The number of members in each group are 5 or 6. To maximize the value of group sessions, we established discussion guidelines, set clear goals for each session, required parents to be prepared like completing select reading, applying the skills they were learning to their families as the assignment, etc. We also ensured participation by asking parents to sign an agreement at the beginning of PESP and sending instant messages to them as a reminder 24 hours before each session.

The head teacher of their child's class is also the group leader. They got training on group leadership skill including structuring the session to stay focused, universalizing the concerns shared by parents to promote cohesion and ease anxiety, summarizing what they learn to help understand the concepts and clear up confusion, promoting feedback and using encouragement, etc. Thus the head teacher's role in the group study is not acting as an expert, they promote parents involvement, stimulate discussion and encourage parents to openly express their thoughts and share their experiences.

After we finished the 8 sessions, the comments and feedback from parents showed that they benefited not only from the new knowledge and skills they learned but also from the experiences of sharing similar issues they encountered every day. For example, both parents and children suffered from struggling getting up in the morning and tearful, tantrum-filled goodbyes when parents dropped off their children in our kindergarten. Sometimes parents felt more anxiety about being separated than children do. By helping parents understand separation anxiety is a perfectly normal part of childhood development though providing knowledge about child development and encouraging parents sharing their experiences, teaching them coping strategies and applying those strategies at drop-off time, the level of their anxiety was lowered down significantly.

b) On-site Guidance

This is the second component in PESP. It occurs when there are parent-child activities in our kindergarten, which provides opportunity for both parents and teachers to observe each other and discuss together. On one hand, teachers need an insight into parent-child relationship which helps them analyze the issues that parents met and figure out possible solutions, but they encountered some barriers at home visit. On-site guidance can compensate it to some degree. On the other hand, although parents were learning some knowledge on child development specific to their children's age group and shared the experiences of how they applied the new ideas at home during the group sessions, they still need more practices to enhance their skills. On-site guidance provides them opportunities of directly observing how teachers communicate with children and guide their behaviors, learning to use the appropriate strategies with help of teachers in various situations, discussing with teachers and others to get more suggestions and receive information from different viewpoints and then reaching their own conclusions.

Therefore, we held some parent-child activities from time to time, invited parents to attend and provided on-site guidance when applicable. Actually, parents got more chances to practice their skills in a variety of situations like social conflicts, throw a tantrum and so on. They learned how to teach more helpful behavior, give choices, change physical settings, and ignore behavior when it is appropriate to do so, etc. For example, many parents talked about the big mess made by their children every day no matter how many times they reminded children to clean up after they finish. They said they set a clear limit already, taught logical consequences, but it seemed that the limit didn't work well. The mess they made at home was still overwhelming. After we observed both parents and their child, we found out some possible causes such as failed to be consistent with expectations, parents themselves are not good role models, etc. We gave parents our comments, and also showed them around how we provided an orderly, beautiful environment for children which encourages tidying, sorting and organizing.

c) Child Observation Record Sharing

By the time a new school year began in September 2016, we started to bring PESP parents into the third component of PESP: Child Observation Record Sharing. Child Observation Record is an assessment instrument designed to use anecdotal data to evaluate the current levels and abilities of children and can also be used to identify children's individual needs and the effectiveness of the current curriculum.

Our teachers wrote brief anecdotes that objectively describe children's behavior (see a sample as shown in Table 1). "They use these notes to evaluate children's development and then plan activities to help individual children and the classroom as a whole progress" (HIGHSCOPE, 2017). The observation record of each child was sent to his/her parents with the weekly report at the end of each week. However, parents

didn't really understand the purpose of observation. Actually it is difficult for Chinese parents to take an objective look at their children especially when they are experiencing high level of anxiety in the society full of fierce competitions. Sometimes they feel that their children are geniuses and able to do everything, the other times they get frustrated just because their children fail to meet some unrealistic expectations they set. It has become a common issue in parents. That is why we decide to involve parents in writing and sharing anecdotal records with teachers in PESP.

We started from interpreting child observation records made by teachers, helping parents understand how the records indicate the children's strength, abilities and their individual needs, which help teachers plan appropriate curriculum and effective individualized instruction for each child. Then we encouraged parents to write down what happened at home as objective as possible using the same record form. Parents firstly filled in the part "Child Observation". Then teacher assisted parents with filling the rest three parts after communicating with parents and provided suggestions on how to extend the learning into their homes.

The process of sharing child observation records help parents find out children's learning styles and behavior patterns, and thus set both challenging and achievable goals for children based on the data they collected.

Table 1 *A Sample of Child Observation Record*

Child Observation Record

Child: __Child A__ Date of Birth: __Mar. 18th, 2014__ Date: __May 17th, 2017__ Time: __9:30AM__ Observer: __Teacher A__ Location/Setting: __Sandbox, Outdoor__	Learning & Development
Observation Record Child A looked around in the sandbox and picked up a castle bucket. Child A smiled and talked to himself "I can make a castle". He waved his hand to 2 peers and said "Let's make something". He sat down in the sandbox, put the bucket in front of him and started filling the bucket with sands by shovel. When Child A filled the castle bucket, He put the bucket upside down and removed the bucket from sands, but the sand castle collapsed. He said "It collapses. " He dug deeper, filled the castle bucket again with humid sands and pat sands tight. Then put the bucket upside down again. He succeed to make it this time. "Look, I build a sand castle. Would you like to make one?" He said to his peers.	1. Show the ability to explore cause & effect and solve problem. 2. Increasingly interacts and communicates with peers to initiate a group play
Interpretation Child A draws on his everyday experiences and applies the knowledge to his problem-solving process. He also show interests in interacting and communicating with peers to initiate a group play by saying "Look, I build a sand castle. Would you like to make one?".	**Linking to the activity** Future Planning Bakery: Cookie shaping Implemented on May 23rd, 2017

d) One-on-one Consultation about Assessment of Child Development

Developmental Checklist is another assessment instrument we used to gather information about children's progress toward developmental goals. We called a meeting at the start of school year, invited parents to come find out about how the assessments works in our classroom. We provided PESP parents one-on-one consultation to communicate important milestones in child development, involved them in the assessment of their child and provided assistant on the specific parenting challenges they face. To help parents understand each item in the checklist, the teacher explained in detail to parents so they can learn how to use the checklist and provide valuable information to the teacher. The checklist is completed by staff and the parents together. Room teachers observe a child first, and then she/he will discuss with the child's parents for the items that she/he has not observed. For example, a teacher may not observe a child's ability to sing songs but through a discussion with the parents, the teacher learns that the child can do it at home. In this way, parents and teachers gain better understanding of what needs to happen in the curriculum or at home to support the child's learning and growth.

Table 2 *A sample of Part of Developmental Checklist for Children of 24-36 Months*

EYASKIDS LEARNING ACADEMY

DEVELOPMENTAL CHECKLIST FOR TODDLER

Child's Name : Child B	Teacher's Name: Teacher B
Date of Birth: May 5th, 2014	Parent/Guardian: Parent B

Not Observed (0)   Emerging (2)   Observed (5)

| B. Social & Emotional Development	Sep. 9th, 2016	Jan. 5th, 2017	Jun. 29th, 2017
B.1.f. Express a wide range of emotions	5	5	5
B.2.c. Shows confidence in abilities (e.g., "I can do it.")	2	5	5
B.4.a. Calls caregiver by name	5	5	5
B.2.i. B.4.e. B.4.f. Takes turns and helps others	2	2	5
B.4.a. Participates in group activities	2	5	5
B.4.c. B.4.g. Demonstrates empathy	2	2	2
B.4.c. B.4.f. Begins to develop relationships with peers (e.g., plays with one or two children on a consistent basis)	2	2	5
B.2.d. B.2.e. Shows awareness of self in relationship to others (e.g., family, culture)	2	5	5
B.3.c. Understands consequences of actions	5	5	5
B.3.f. Listens and responds to others appropriately	2	2	2
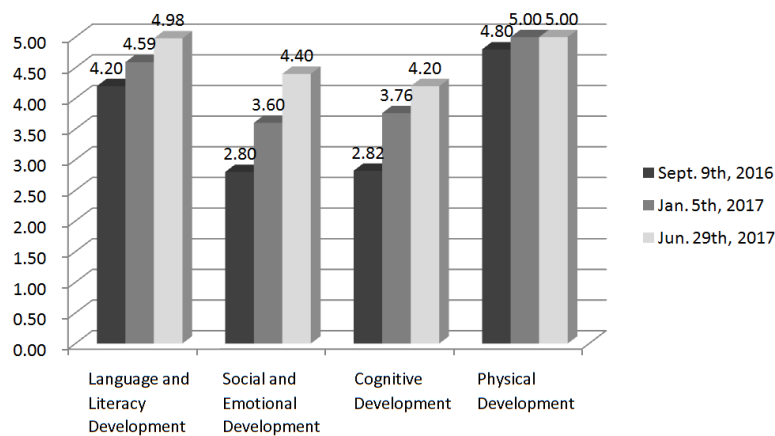
Figure 1. Data comparison among three assessments with developmental checklists

We assess child development in four domains: Language & Literacy, Social & Emotional, Cognitive, and Physical. The assessment with developmental checklists occurs three times each year (one at the start of school year, the other two at the end of each semester) and data comparison is used to measure children's progress on development and learning growth. Table 2 is a sample of the social & emotional development part of the developmental checklist for children of age 2 to 3. We averaged the scores in each domain and made the comparison. Figure 1 is a sample of the comparison among three assessments for measuring a child's progress in the whole process.

In addition, the "Developmental Red Flags" appendix in the Developmental Checklist outlines a range of functional indicators or domains commonly used to monitor healthy child development, as well as potential problem areas for child development. When the staff communicated the purpose of red flags to parents, it also increased their awareness on potential developmental delay and referring for further investigation or treatment when needed.

Continuously monitoring children's development and responding to their individual needs, parents & teachers are able to support children's learning and growth by working together. Furthermore, the collaboration and trust is being built between our kindergarten and family as a result of better mutual understanding.

Results and Discussion

To evaluate the effectiveness of PESP grogram and make improvements for better support to parents, we invited parents to complete the parent survey after the program had been implemented one year and analyzed the data in terms of three aspects including parents' willingness of participation in parent

education program, the beliefs in parenting or child development, and their practices of parenting. Parent interviews with participants who went through four components of PESP program were also conducted to obtain feedbacks from them. We chose some representative data and comparative graphs to illustrate the effectiveness of PESP.

a) Parents' willingness of participation

Figure 2 shows that the percent of parents who strongly agree " Parents acquire knowledge and skills about parenting by continuous learning and practice " increases by 41.19% after PESP. Figure 3 shows that the parents prefer "twice a semester " for parent education sessions occupied the highest proportion (43.75%) before PESP. After PESP, the highest proportion is for the parents who prefer "once a month" and the percent of parents who prefer higher frequency also increases. All of these above indicates the parents' increase in willingness of participation.
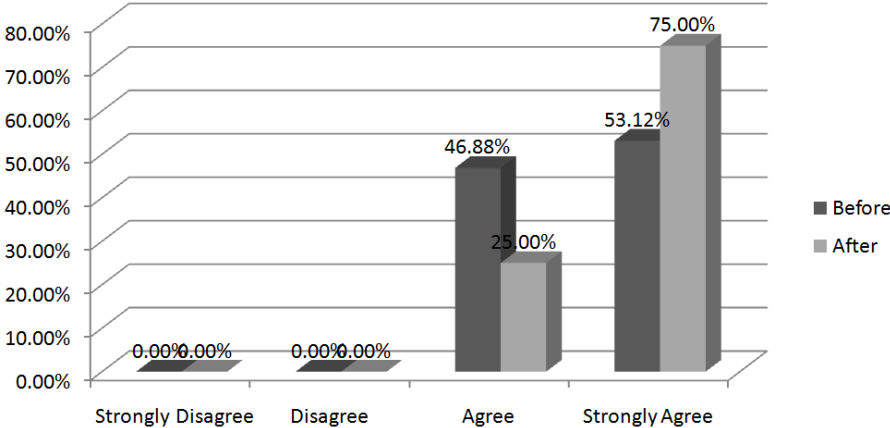

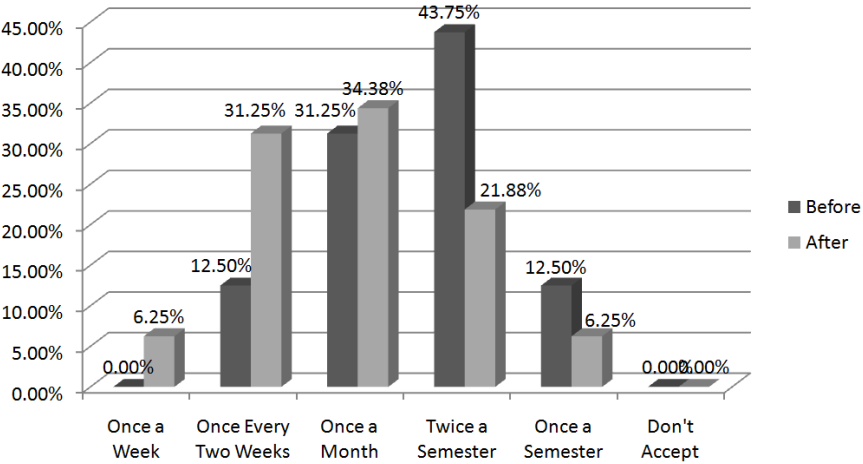*Figure 2.* Parents' view on continuous learning parenting knowledge and skills

Figure 3. Parents' preferred frequency of parent education sessions

b) The beliefs in parenting or child development

Figure 4 shows that parents who have urgent desire to promote their children's intellectual development occupied the highest proportion (46.88%) before PESP. It could be due to the anxiety of Chinese parents' anxiety over the future of their child in a society in which job opportunities are closely tied to educational credential (Zhao, 2015). After PESP, the data shows that they start to pay more attention to positive relationship and children's well-being. Figure 5 also shows that more parents recognize children develop at their own rate. However, parents' reactions in the later interview conducted after questionnaire still implied their worries about the child's future academic performance although most of them acknowledged the importance of whole child. Maybe it is a little bit early to say real changes regard to this aspect are happening.
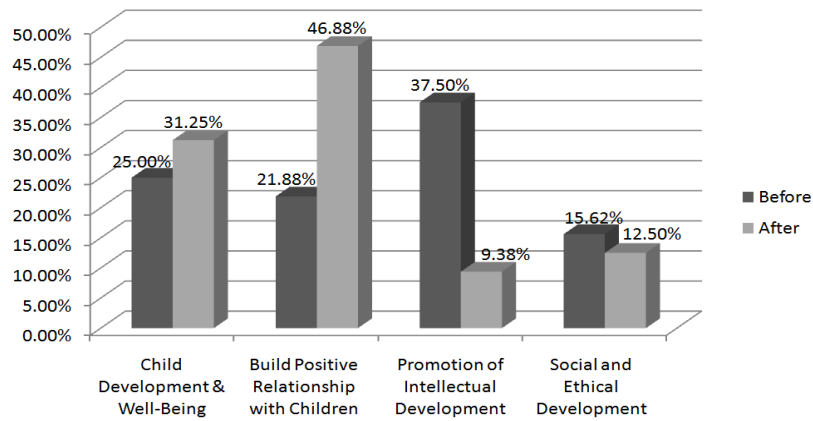

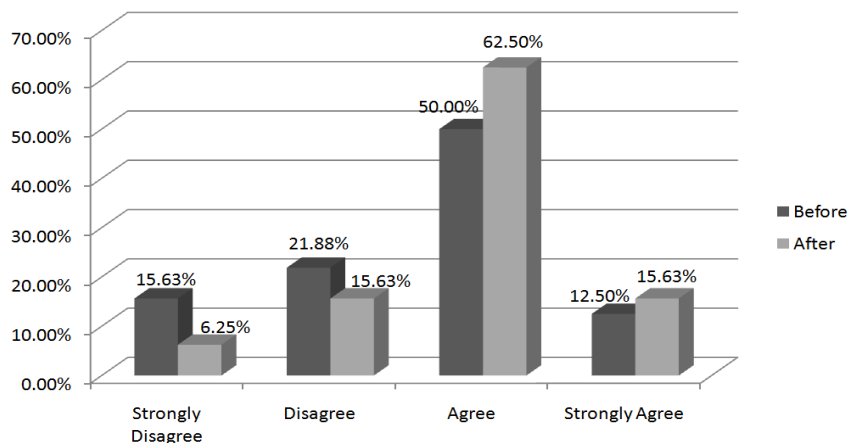*Figure 4.* Knowledge that parents want to learn most

Figure 5. Parents' view on the statement "children develop at their own rate"

c) The practices of parenting

We asked some questions about parenting practices before and after PESP and would like to know how much they change in the families. Figure 6 and Figure 7 are two most common issues on parenting. The data comparison indicates the effort they have made on putting into practice. For example, 53.13% of parents use specific words to encourage children very often after PESP, which increases by 112.52%. The feedback we got from subsequent interviews also shows that what parents learned from PESP does improve the relationship between them and their child. Children become more cooperative and self-regulated after they used the strategies such as setting clear limits, delivering I messages, etc.
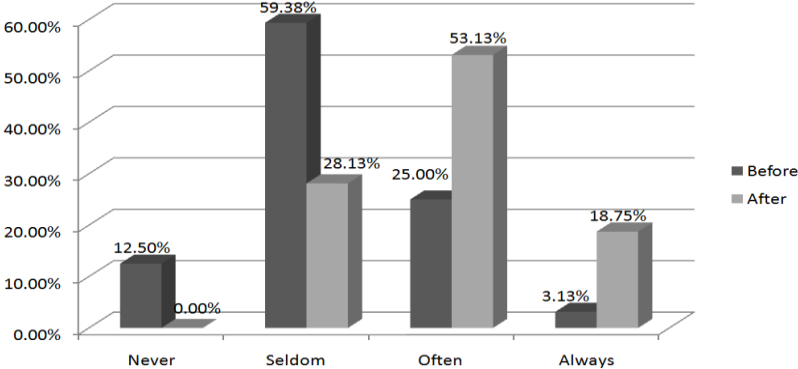

Figure 6. The frequency of using specific words to encourage children
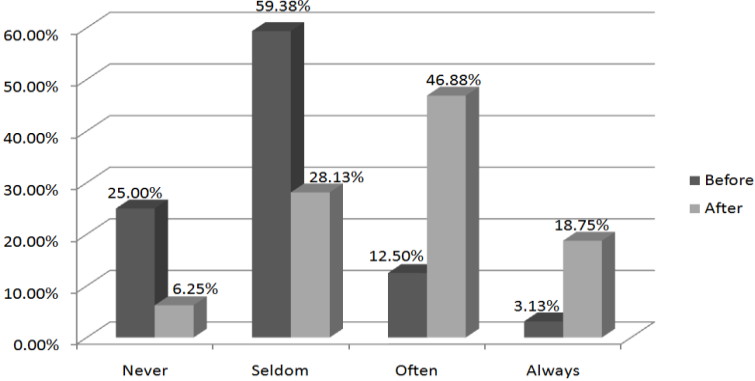
Figure 7. The frequency of identifying the goals of children's misbehavior

During the later interviews, some parents also talked about the previous parent education lectures they have participated in before they joined our kindergarten. Most of these lectures are delivered by a so-called expert and more like one way educating - "experts" provide the required information to the parents without ever asking for their opinion (Rena et al., 2008, p.233). The lack of relevance and ongoing follow-up affects the lecture's practicality and the effectiveness is not acknowledged by the parents. The

comparison they made between two kinds of parent education and comments reflects the their satisfaction of PESP. We are encouraged by this result, but also aware that the data in this small-scale experiment might not exactly reflect the real effectiveness of PESP.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that our PESP promotes the smooth connection between school and family. The PESP parents enjoy the benefits from the program. Their knowledge of child development and learning enhances their confidence in parenting and decision-making skills. They increase their interaction and communication with their children and are more responsive and sensitive to their children's social, emotional, and intellectual developmental needs. Continuous monitoring and regular assessment of child development helps them learn more about their children and individual needs are met through the collaboration between staff and parents.

Therefore, PESP's participants have better understanding of teacher's job and school curriculum. They take initiative to cooperate with staff and are more likely to help when they are requested by teachers to become more involved in their children's learning activities at home. It promotes both teachers and parents' efficiency, reduces their anxiety and stress and facilitates the achievement of our goals on high quality education.

Conclusions

As a country with long history and unique traditional culture, China is experiencing a great social evolution in recent 30 years. Educational concepts and beliefs of each generation are changing dramatically which changes their way of child raising and educating. However, most parents lack related knowledge about modern parenting and therefore almost lost in propagandas from a variety of unreliable sources such as popular books, magazines or hearsay of children education due to unavailability of professional and systematic parent education programs. With the support from our PESP through 8 Two-Hour Group Sessions, On-site Guidance, Child Observation Record Sharing and One-on-One Consultation about Assessment of Child Development, we are gradually guide parents' beliefs, attitude and their parenting behaviors towards science-based modern early childhood education. Compared to before, parents now prefer to seek for support from the professionals in our program instead of those unreliable sources. The post-program parent survey shows that the percent of parents who intend to consult professionals increase by 115.36% (from 40.63% to 87.50%). Parents in the PESP program think that they get effective guidance and a lot of practice opportunities. Furthermore, they get continuous feedback and support when they encounter problems in practice since teachers help them to analyze the causes, and clarify some misunderstanding which leads to the inappropriate practice in the process. Teachers also believe that the rapport relationship and cooperation between parents and them facilitates mutual understanding and

provides opportunities of access to more comprehensive and effective information. Compared with those who haven't joint the PESP, their mutual trust and cooperation is much better and teachers' work is carried out more efficiently.

However, parent education is still a relatively new concept in mainland China, there are some factors that impede the effectiveness of PESP program, such as immature program design, teachers' lack of rich experience of working with family although they have accepted relevant training, imperfect national policies for supporting parent education, neglect of its importance by the whole society. In addition, traditional Chinese culture still have profound influences on parents' educational concept and relationship between family members. Many problems are caused not only by parents. Fierce social competition and limited educational resources impact the improvement of parents' mental health and wellbeing. The social structure, social services mechanism and relevant policies still need more improvements to facilitate the development of parent education.

Therefore, completely achieving the three stage goals of PESP will be definitely a long-term process with challenges. PESP at current stage mainly focus on assisting parent with learning knowledge and practicing related skills to support them in their role as primary educator and caregiver of their child. In the next phase, we will take advantage of the experiences gained at this stage to involve more parents in our PESP, and gain a deeper insight into the environment that children and their families live in and aim at parent's identity, his or her experience, beliefs and perceptions, confidence and anxiety. It will help promote parents' self-efficacy, support their personal development and support them as decision makers for themselves, their children, and our program.

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GROWING UP WITH THE FLOWERS IN KINDERGARTEN STUDY OF PRACTICE RESEARCH FOR KINDERGARTEN-BASED ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Xian Jiaotong, Wu Jing, Chen Zhihui & Li Yu

Abstract

Exploiting and utilizing resources of ecological education actively and effectively in kindergarten, family, and community, focusing on requirements and developments of children, carrying out various education activities, and constructing kindergarten-based curriculum, are important measures for improving the quality of kindergarten education. This paper presents a kindergarten-based ecological education system from an ecological education perspective. The main content of this system contains theme activities and the kernel of this system includes Life Courses, Social Courses, Chinese traditional culture Courses, and Featured Courses. The power combined with family, kindergarten, and community education has received good social effects, which is developed by completing the system of teacher training and by improving teacher's capability of understanding and using ecological education based on the mechanism of teacher's professional development. The concept of ecological education promotes the kindergarten management in education practices, which also enhances team cohesion and improves the cooperation quality of family, kindergarten, and community education by combining the rigid system with humanistic care.

Key Words: Ecological education, ecological resources, kindergarten-based curriculum system

Background

With elementary education reform in our country, Ministry of Education promulgated The Guidance of Kindergarten Education in July 2001. In the first part, it clearly put forward: "Kindergarten should provide a healthy, rich life and activity environment, to meet the various needs of children's development and make them a happy and meaningful childhood." In September 2012, the Ministry of Education issued Early Learning and Development Guideline and made it clear that "... Children in the process of exploring natural things and using mathematics to solve practical problems in the life, not only get rich perceptual experience , develop the image thinking fully, and attempt to classify, sort, judge, reason, gradually develop logical thinking ability to lay a good foundation for further study in other fields... ". In the section of recommendations, it figured out "... Often bringing children to contact the nature, arouse their curiosity and inquiry desire. For example: to provide children with some interesting exploration tools, use our own curiosity and exploration enthusiasm to infect and drive children. Discover and share some new, interesting things or phenomena with children to find answers to questions... "And so on. These have fully explained the importance of ecological environment to children's learning and development, emphasizing that children should learn to explore and understand the world in the nature.

Ecological environment is the basic material conditions which kindergarten carries out the games and education activities. The ecological education is an attempt to improve and innovate the kindergarten ecological environment on the basis of the practical situation, including the reorganization and integration between education environment and the conditions. As a new thing in the field of study, theme activities including seasonal or festival factors is an important part of the early childhood curriculum. The ecological education provides an educational opportunity to carry out the curriculum. The development of kindergarten-based curriculum plays an important role in the development of children and teachers.

Xi'an Jiaotong University Kindergarten has a history of 60 years, and there are 188 trees, 33 kinds of trees with 37 acres of land; Elephant Slides, Rockery and Streamlet, Pavilions in kindergarten can show the historical traces of the Westward Move from Shanghai in 1956. It is imperative to make full use of the advantages of kindergarten natural environment and carry out rich educational practice. Over the past two years, we have fully taped a variety of educational resources, enriched the content and methods of ecological education, and improved the effectiveness of education to promote children's physical and mental health development. At the same time, the forms of education are getting more specific, more practical, more operable, to build the kindergarten-based ecological curriculum system and form a kindergarten cultures which have a cultural characteristic of the university.

The theoretical basis of the construction of the kindergarten-based curriculum

Sustainable Development Educational Thoughts   In 1987, the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development issued 《Our Common Future》, put forward the "sustainable development" thoughts. Sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the people and does not pose a hazard to the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Bronfenbrenner' Ecological Systems Theory   American psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner proposed Human Ecology Theory firstly, which the environment is a complex ecosystem and can be divided into microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem.

Schwab's curriculum "Practice Model"   American scholar Schwab (J.J.) presented the Practice Model of curriculum development in the 1960s and 1970s. He argues that educational theory and practice are different in terms of objective and object, the source of problem solving, and the solution to the problems. Educational theory focuses on general, universal knowledge, pursues the truth, verifiability, universality in the education system. However educational practice is concerned about the feasibility, because the content of the practice is specific and affected by a specific situation.

Research goals, contents and methods

Research Goals First, to construct a kindergarten-based curriculum system which has ecological characteristics and is good for the children of all ages and improve constantly in practice. Second, getting close to nature and into the community in a harmonious, humane approach, children can enrich their knowledge and experience, have a desire to explore and learning by themselves, learn to care about, pay attention to all things around life, form the initial ecological concept. Third, to improve the teachers' understanding the core concepts of ecological education, to establish a curriculum concept, and to enhance teachers' reflection ability about the curriculum even the teachers' overall education level.

Research Contents   Teasing the existing ecological education resources, and using a variety of ways to guide children of different ages to learn the same kind of educational resources, and carrying out a variety of educational practice.

Teachers try to design the framework of curriculum activities, establish a scientific and rational curriculum concept, educational concept, and sum up the effective ways and strategies to carry out ecological education activities.

Summing up the ways of which parents participate in the ecological curriculum activities, and applying more home, community resources to kindergarten's education activities to enhance the cooperation level between home and kindergarten.

Research Methods   Action Research: Design the network of the ecological education curriculum and make the plans; organize teachers to take comments and suggestions to know the problems in the process of implementation, and seek experts' guidance and help actively, adjust the plan, sum up the work effect timely, and improve the work of thinking constantly.

Document analysis: to collect, organize, analyze some related literature, to know the kindergarten curriculum model in domestic and foreign, to provide a theoretical basis for designing the kindergarten-based curriculum.

Case analysis: by analyzing the meaningful, valuable cases in practice, to provide a strong support for the construction of the kindergarten-based curriculum.

The kindergarten Curriculum System Based on Ecological Education

Establishing a kindergarten curriculum system on the basis of ecological education.

This curriculum system mainly includes life courses, social courses, Chinese traditional culture courses and featured courses. Each course is an independent part and has a close relationship with each other. In the process of implementing the curriculum, according to the characteristics of children at different ages, we set different themes respectively and gradually implement them. The objectives of the theme are formulated according to children's needs, then to choose different teaching content in all areas, so as to optimize the educational effect.
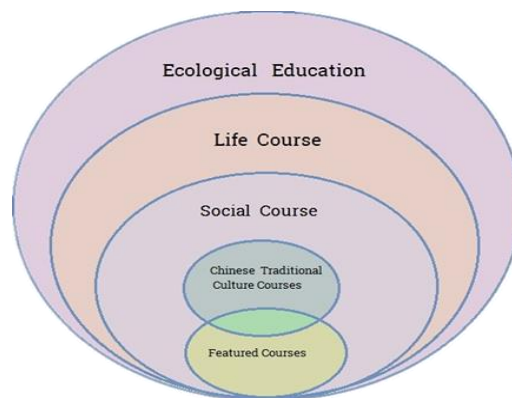

Figure 1: Ecological education curriculum system map

Life course

Kindergarten courses should be linked with the experience of children's life, early childhood experts have called for "Returning to children's life, Returning the course to children ". The profile of The Guidance

clearly stated that kindergarten should provide children with healthy, rich living and playing environment, to meet their various developmental needs, so that they can get experiences which are beneficial to the physical and mental development in a happy childhood. Our educator Tao Xingzhi believes that life is education, society is school, teaching, learning and doing should be one. Chen Heqin advocated "living education", and advocates kindergarten curriculum should be based on nature, society as the center. These reflect the value of the living environment to a kindergarten curriculum largely. Children's emotional education should be based on the children's living environment and experiences which is one of the important factors affecting the growth of children. It is the main power to stimulate children's emotion and make children grow. We are also well aware that the kindergarten curriculum comes from life, carries out in life, And setting theme is closely linked with children's life, to set up theme education activities such as Beautiful Spring, Colorful Autumn, A Gift from Winter Grandpa, Kindergarten's Flowers, Big Family etc. These fully show the characteristics which kindergarten-based curriculum is close to children's life.

Case 1: Planting Diary

In the winter wheat planting activity, because of the difference of planting box placement, wheat of Class 10 Grade 3 is growing better than Class 5, straws also stronger. Children in Class 5 are doubted: we are very diligent to watering and fertilizing wheat, why doesn't it have the ear of wheat? Later, under the teacher's guidance, the children found the crux of the problem: Although children in two classes water, fertilize and weed the wheat, but the planting box of Class five is in the middle of two teaching buildings, it can't get more light other than the planting box of Class 10 placed in the East playground. So light becomes an important factor influencing the growth of wheat. On the whole progress, teachers and children generate a series of " Planting Winter Wheat ", from planting outdoor to the illumination experiment indoor, then to complete the "Planting Diary" with mom and dad. The kids know the value of life, but also understand the "Even pains, probably no gains". Children and their parents recognized this theme activity.

For example, in the theme activity Beautiful Spring, we organize children from Grade 1 to Grade 3 to find spring's signs in Xi'an Jiaotong University Campus, children have a further perception of spring changes, and understand the characteristics of different plants. In this period, according to their interests each class will generate different activities in all areas such as: conversation, painting from life, and health activity. Among them, the children have a strong interest in exploring the Locust tree, and teaching group generated a series of activities around this.

Art: Creative activity of Leaves

Language:Prose Poem"One Locust Leaf"

Science: Bees and Locust Honey

Language:Fragrant Locust Flowers

Science: Locust and Mulberry

Physical Activity: Touch the Locust and Come Back

Math:How Many Mulberry Trees in the Kindergarten?

Physical Activity: Making and Tasting Rice by Locust Flowers

Social Activity: Picking Locust Flowers

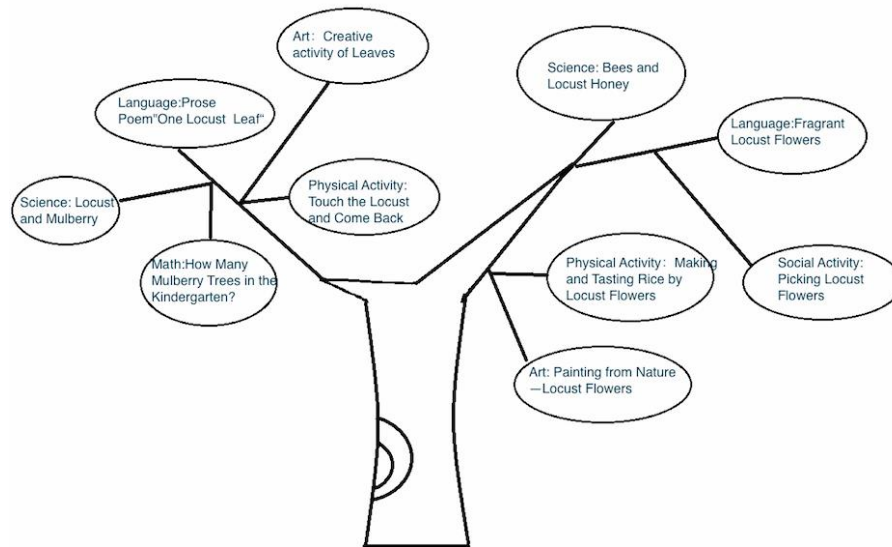Art: Painting from Nature —Locust Flowers

Figure 2: The Secrets of Locust Tree in kindergarten-based curriculum

In the process of learning the locust tree, the course is divided into two parts. Respectively, locust tree and flos sophorae are the main line to generate courses in five areas. In the activities, the children stand under the locust tree with great interest to observe the locust tree and flos sophorae and discuss the "What can we do with flos sophorae". Teachers using it as a turning point, the children's attentions are attracted to observe the leaves and the trunk. In a pleasant atmosphere, children observe, discuss, and exchange their thoughts, to know the growth characteristics of locust tree and flos sophorae, promote their observation, language ability. Through the activity of Picking Up Flos Sophorae and Making Rice by mixed-aged children, it improves children's operational ability, enriches experience of social interaction with peers, stimulates the children's desire for scientific inquiry and interest, accumulates useful direct experience and perceptual knowledge in the process of contact with the nature.

Social Courses

The Guidance of Kindergarten Education figured out, we should make full use of the educational resources from natural environment and community to expand children's learning and living space. Nowadays early childhood education is developing from a closed teaching to a open activities, emphasizing that we should be close to the nature, society, community and develop an open and free learning space, emphasizing that we should establish a relationship which is interactive learning with the surrounding environment and people, emphasizing the role of all potential resources in the development and utilization for young children. Among the factors influencing the development of young children, the social environment and community resources are also one of the main causes. Therefore, in early

childhood activities, we should be good at exploring and integrating various potential education resources. Social courses also play an important role in promoting the growth of children. We carry out activities such as I Adopt A Little Tree, Happy in Yangling, Little Museum, we Have Only One Earth. Here let's have a detailed analysis.

Case 2: Happy in Yangling

In order to expand children's living and learning space and provide children with more opportunities to interact with the outside world, enrich the child's life experience, the research team carried out inter-school exchange activities with a kindergarten which is affiliated to Northwest Agriculture and Farming University. The two kindergartens organized some teachers and children to visit, took advantage of the resources, provided an opportunity to outside, came to the nature and knew the hi-tech achievements. Our children visited the EXPO of Northwest Agriculture and Farming University and Yangling Modern Agricultural Demonstration Base that is a magical nature world, children were marveled at those flora and fauna or their specimens and hi-tech flowers, vegetables, and trees, even they enjoyed themselves so much as to forget to leave. They knew the process of which a seed grew to the wheat directly, and tasted fresh organic fruits, vegetables, experienced the conveniences that hi-tech gives people.

Chinese Traditional Culture Courses

Chinese culture has a long history, the traditional cultures are important contents in Early childhood education. In the context of harmonious society, traditional culture education is valuable for social developments and children's growth. Traditional culture education in the kindergarten is almost about festival, these festival ceremonies provide children with ways to know others' emotions or thoughts, experience the common feelings, so that children will collaborate and share with others. Because of this, kindergarten carries out a series of theme activities around Chinese traditional festivals. Being one of kindergarten-based ecological education curriculum system, Chinese traditional culture courses are great value of cultivating traditional virtues. Therefore we set up some theme activities such as Honey Baby, Dragon Boat Festival, Mid Autumn Festival etc. Here are some brief introductions.

Case 3: Dragon Boat Festival

In order to experience the long history and folkways of Chinese traditional cultures, we carried out the Dragon Boat Festival. Besides the plentiful activities in each class, kindergarten also invited some parents into the theme activities to provide opportunities to communicate with children.

The activities are mainly divided into two parts. The one is the homemade handwritten newspaper by parents and children. Parents help children collect pictures, photos, information about the Dragon Boat

Festival so that children know the legends, origins and celebrations of the Festival and feel the profound Chinese. After the collection, they will make the handwritten newspaper, and then take to the kindergarten. The children will share and introduce their own production process. And finally a display is arranged, and the children are excited when seeing their newspapers. The other is the Display of My Sachet. By enjoying the various shapes, colors and styles of sachets, so that children learn more about the origins of the Dragon Boat Festival. Parents and children make the sachets together, though style, material, production methods are not limited. Parents are very interested, and record down the process or the experience. Children also take their sachets to the kindergarten and share with others.

Featured Courses

Being located in the university and relying on the cultural heritage of 100 years and atmosphere, Xi'an Jiaotong University campus of 60 years' history provide our kindergarten more natural resources. In order to make full use of the resources of the university and children know where the scientists work in, and then set up the ideals of science, kindergarten set up the activities such as Beautiful Jiaotong University, Cherry Blossoms, Osmanthus Fragrans, We Love Science etc.

Case 4: We Love Science

Xi'an Jiaotng University has a well-known robot experiment team, takes part in robot competitions at home and abroad every year. So Visiting the Robots caused a sensation among children, "What does the robot look like"," What does it do for us" have become an urgent doubts. In addition, Xi'an Jiaotong University gathered top talent in all fields, which provides a wealth of scientists resources for our kindergarten. In order to make children approaching the scientists, and establish the ambitions " I can be a scientist in the future" from childhood, so we invite some famous scientists to the kindergarten every semester and carry out Be with Scientists Grandfather, Scientists Father Getting Into the Class etc.

Case 5: Robot also makes mistakes

Some Ph.Ds from Xi'an Jiaotong University introduced the function of a variety of robots, but also showed the ability of pouring water on site. The robot held a small kettle in one hand, but when the water was poured into the children's cup, the water was spilled, and the robot did it again pouring 120 ml. A boy said: I would like to invent a robot being more accurate, so that it can reduce the errors. Not only Children experience the novelty skills of the robot, but also found that the accuracy of the robot need to be improved. We should have a rational worship of hi-tech.

Establishing the network of the theme activities starting from the children's demands

According to Vygotsky 's " Zone of Proximal Development" theory, we construct the basic framework of ecological education curriculum scaffold children's learning: It links the surrounding environment as the center of Me, designs theme education contents from small to large, from near and far. Combined with the educational characteristics of five major areas, we strive to build an open, plentiful, interesting and developing child-centered curriculum. The aim is to help children cultivate the abilities of caring for others, concerning about the community and nature, loving life, self-development, so that children become the real learning subjects, the healthy development of children's physical and mental health are promoted.
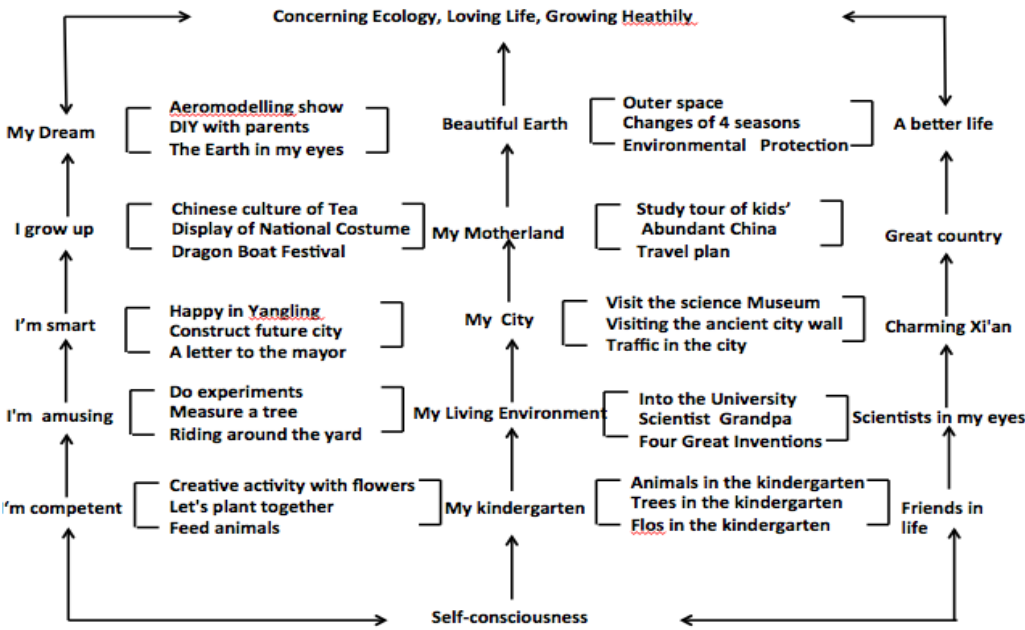

Figure 3: the Network Diagram of Kindergarten-based Ecological Education Curriculum

The network of kindergarten-based ecological education curriculum includes one core and two branches. The core is centered as "Me" radiating out the environment, from small and large, from near and far, we designed this cognitive line as self-consciousness-my kindergarten - my living environment - my city - my country - beautiful Earth. In this course network, life courses, social courses, Chinese traditional culture courses, Featured courses are integrated and penetrated mutually. In choosing education contents, we are concerned about the needs of children's growth and the actual educational resources, arrange some corresponding teaching activities each cognitive stage in order to achieve effective learning.

The Characteristics of Kindergarten-based Ecological Education Curriculum

A Curriculum Structure is Child-oriented

Kindergarten-based Ecological Education Curriculum aims to help and promote the learning of children by using the ecological education resources from kindergarten, home and communities. Therefore, in constructing the framework of curriculum, teachers need to follow the principle of child-oriented, analyze

the teaching points in each ecological education resources carefully. Combined with the age characteristics and developmental needs of children, we should pay attention to children's day life and provide opportunities of play, experience, operation and practice for them, so that they can participate in the learning process. Children are the main body when developing curriculum's goals which are about cognitive, ability and emotional. In the theme activities Trees in the Kindergarten, the teacher generated a series of interesting activities based on the children's conversation. In late May, teachers lead preschoolers outside, the children came to play under the paulownia tree, found lots of purple flowers, picked up them and asked each other "What's this", "Are these flowers useful to", "What's the use of these flowers". According to the children's talking and discussion, the teacher designed some activities in science, art, such as Making Bookmarks with Paulownia flower, Creative Art with Petals, Painting from Nature. Children have an autonomous learning space to understand and learn the Paulownia flower at length.

The Curriculum Content Embodies Diversity and Flexibility

The Kindergarten-based Ecological Education Curriculum emphasizes the design of appropriate courses for children of different ages, in which the courses of each age group are interwoven. Combined with festivals, seasons, traditional culture, kindergarten-based ecological resources, home, community and so on, a diversified kindergarten-based curriculum was born and the core is children's appeal. Combined with the children's interests and needs in learning, the curriculum contents are adjusted, enriched and developed continuously. It has the spiral characteristics, contains all dimensions continuous learning in learning and development, and got diverse, flexible and suitable strong supports. In the theme Beautiful Hometown, we carry out the activities such as Social Activity: I Love My Hometown, Language Activity: Praising Xi'an, Art activity: Clay of Noodles or Steamed Buns. Although children have great interests, but it is mainly in children's perceptual learning lacking of depth and experience. On the kindergarten-based ecological education Curriculum, we make full use of the kindergarten, home and community resources, the courses will be carried out from indoors to outdoors, a series of activities such as Specialty Snacks to Taste, Special Performance to Enjoy, Folk Art to Do have stimulated children's interest in learning and improved the participation and initiative of children greatly.

Curriculum background attaches importance to traditional culture

China is an ancient country with 5000 years of history, it has a splendid culture and excellent traditional virtues. How do we inherit the excellent cultures, merging into the kindergarten education, so that children have a high recognition and consciousness to traditional culture, making our country more prosperous and powerful, has become the background. The virtues advocated by Chinese traditional culture have

been embodied and inherited in the curriculum. For example, in the activities of Dragon Boat Festival, Mid Autumn Festival, Double Ninth Festival, children make Rice Dumplings, Moon cake or lovely gifts through the mixed-age or parent-child activities, they really feel the customs and human feelings of Chinese traditional festivals, and carry forward the traditional virtues of solidarity and respect.

Emphasis on cooperation among kindergarten, home and community in the process
The Guidance pointed out: family is an important partner to kindergarten, so we should follow the principles of respect, equality, cooperation, strive for the parents' understanding, support and active participation, and actively support and help parents improve education ability. Make full use of the natural environment and educational resources of the community to expand the space of children's life and study. Nowadays, cooperation with home and community in early childhood education is an inevitable trend.

First, change the channels of cooperation and pay attention to experiencing participation. Family is the first place for children to receive education, as well as the place for their lifelong development. Therefore, it is an essential part of kindergarten work to establish an active relationship with parents and help them master the scientific rearing ways. At the same time, parents can be the diggers and implementers of the kindergarten education invisible curriculum. For example, in theme activity of Mom and Dad Being Teacher, a father from SWAT performed with his partners; a university teacher mother showed the tea culture; a manager mom showed traditional opera......Understanding, trust and love are effectively communicated with each other. Curriculum promotes the establishment of humanistic ecological environment and improves the quality of education.

Second, promote mutual benefit and interaction, and form effective support. In early childhood education, family and kindergarten have a common goal, that is through cooperation to form effective support can promote preschool education to be comprehensive, whole, all-round implementation. For example, in the course of Planting Winter Wheat, parents and children complete the planting diary together. As a result, an effective interaction between the family and class exists. On the one hand, through continuous observations, parents understand the cognitive characteristics of children, then to cultivate children's observation, persistence, responsibility; on the other hand, parents' participation greatly enriched the content and form of kindergarten education, making the activities more continuity.
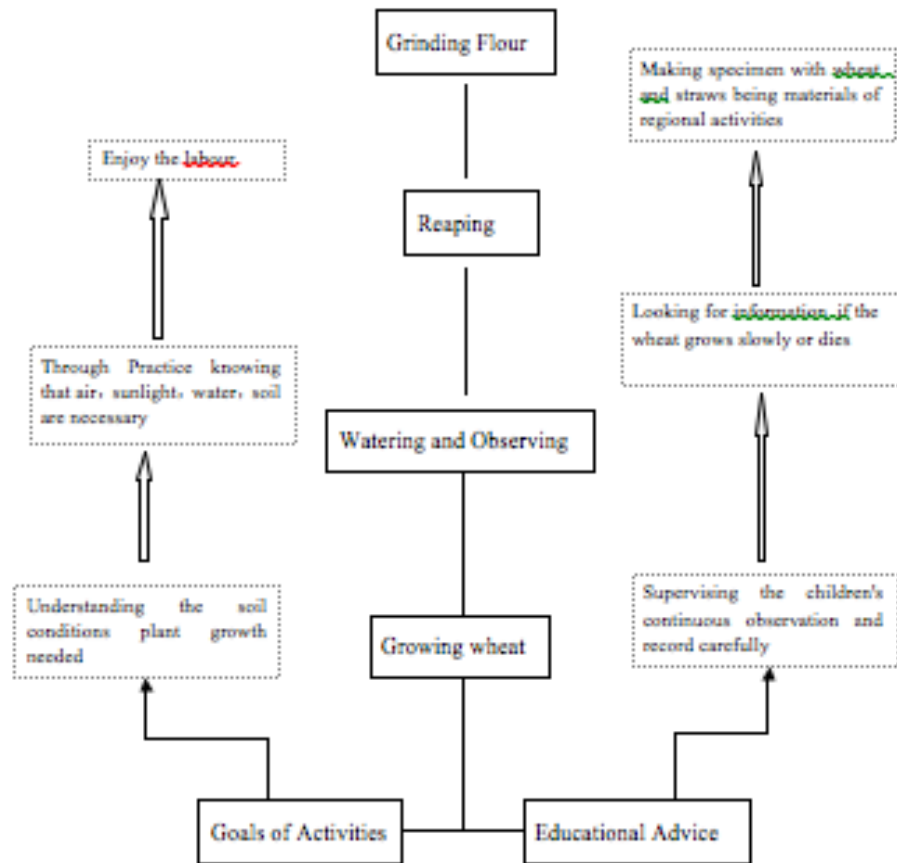
Figure 4: The course map of Growing Winter Wheat

Third, collect parents' resources, play their respective advantages. The kindergarten-based ecological education curriculum can play the advantages of kindergarten education and family education fully. Kindergarten is a specialized educational institution, and preschool teachers are professional educators, they understand the rules and characteristics of children's physical and mental development, grasp the scientific methods of education, carry out a planned, purposeful and organized education. To a parent, there is a blood, family and economic relationship between him/her and children, so this kind of education has a strong infectivity, long-term and targeted education, contents are complex and various, education methods are flexible.

For example, in the theme activity We Love Science, we make full use of parents' resources for kindergarten education activities, play their respective advantages, parents are teaching assistants to broaden children's horizons and enrich the child's experience. A professor working at the University's Human Intelligence Lab is in charge of introducing the development and function of robots. A high school chemistry teachers bring curious chemistry experiments ......

Parents employed in different occupations can give different information and different styles of activities to children. This atmosphere of group participation influences children and inspires them and enhances the education efforts among kindergarten, home and communities.

Promoting Teachers' Professional Development in the Construction of Kindergarten-based Curriculum

Kindergarten teachers access to an effective growth platform in the process of ecological education curriculum construction. The development of ecological education resources, the use of ecological education and the implementation of the curriculum provide the opportunity for learning and research; teachers transformed into knowledge and experience of the constructor gradually from the traditional activities of the designers, organizers and mentors.

Participating in kindergarten-based curriculum practice improves teachers' professional autonomy

Around the ecological education curriculum system, there are many ways of discussing and analyzing, such as teacher trainings, massed learning，group learning, autonomous learning, discussion with experts etc., can stimulate teachers interests and desires to keep learning and developing. Teachers should learn to design activities in a higher angle, not only considering the entry point of ecological education activities, but also select the educational point of a certain resource according to the child's ages and developmental characteristics.

The research of Ecological Education Curriculum has changed the teachers' curriculum and educational view in some sense, and caused changes in educational behaviors. They are no longer copying the syllabus to teach, but to consider the children's interests and needs, kindergarten and community ecological resources.

Case six: Delicious mulberry fruit

In the kindergarten, there is a tree attracting much attention, because the children always feed silkworms in the beginning of spring, they will pick mulberry leaves every afternoon. Children often have deals with peers: pick up the little mulberry leaves, do not pick too much, the mulberry tree will die without leaves..... Soon, children saw the mulberry grow fruit, often asked, "teacher, what is that dark thing on the tree?"" "Mulberry?" . In order to satisfy the curiosity of children, the teacher got the ladder, some brave boys climbed it to pick mulberries. When the children carrying mulberries picked on their own to share with peers, the proud feeling is self-evident.

Participating in the practices of kindergarten-based curriculum expands the teachers' professional knowledge

The professional knowledge is the most basic and the most important part of teachers' professional structure. As an educator, teachers not only have the skills knowledge of music, art, dance, piano, handmade skills, also need the general knowledge of history, geography, biology, mathematics, science and humanities. It is necessary for teachers to have lots of knowledge to fill children's mind.

This study of ecological education is not confined to the natural ecological environment in the kindergarten, also focuses on macro-environment of the kindergarten, family and community. To develop a kindergarten-based curriculum teachers need to know the disciplinary knowledge such as science, sociology, natural geography, but also know some traditional folk knowledge, indigenous knowledge, cultural knowledge, so as to increase the kind of knowledge types to meet the children's needs.

In early stage of the study, the research content is aimed at designing curriculum framework, so teachers' gains are the knowledge expansion in the field of natural science. For instance, in the theme activities Trees in the Kindergarten, teachers should thoroughly understand the basic knowledge of every tree, have clear concepts and knowledge to meet all kinds of problems raised by children. Here are some examples of the Chinese parasol tree. Which genera and family the Chinese parasol tree is ? What are the growth habits and characteristics of it? What is the geographical distribution, the economic value and how to cultivate it?

In addition, the construction of this curriculum provides teachers with opportunities to develop their educational wisdoms. In countless scenes, teachers should cope with children's questions flexibly, catch the "balls" thrown by children. These all strengthen the teachers' ability to reflect on and internalize.

Participating in kindergarten-based curriculum practice improves teachers' professional abilities.

The design of curriculum network plays a significant role in improving the curriculum design ability, teaching design ability, research ability and reflective ability of teachers. For example, when designing the curriculum framework of Tree, most teachers list all the related activities in mind and match with the kindergarten education topics. However such a design in lack of the main line can be boring and a mere formal. After the discussions, we deny the original ideas and content inappropriate, constantly revise, and

determine the form: the network can be radar type around the typical features of trees, also can be a tree type. Besides, the names of activities are also free from the restrictions of five areas, we can integrate the science based on observation with language or social activities, and integrate art, health and science based on inquiry.
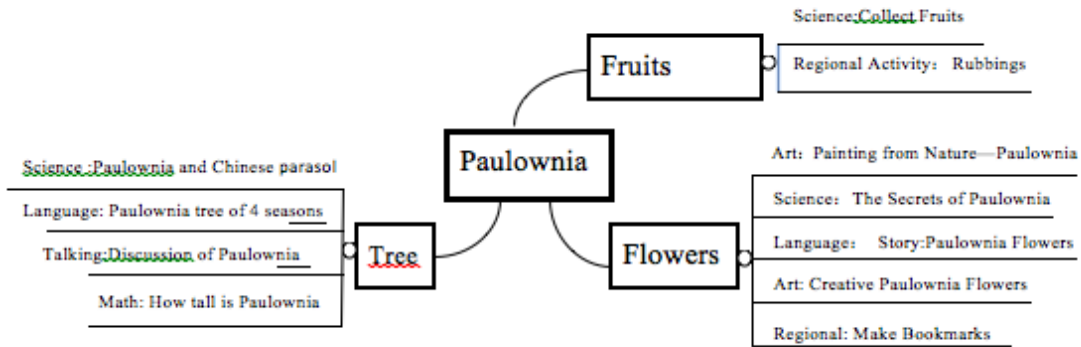

Figure 5: Activities of Paulownia

As above, this figure show the core from trees, to flowers and fruits, the forms are extended from group education activities to regional activities, home activities. The curriculum design ability of teachers increased significantly.

Participating in the study drives teachers echelon construction

According to the actual situation, teachers can be divided into three levels: qualified training of new teachers; professional training of qualified teachers; demonstration training of backbone teachers. At the same time, the implementation of the "academic leader training plan" and "hand in hand" training project for the backbone teachers establishes the three-dimensional training network, to improve the overall level of teachers and lay a solid foundation for improving teaching quality.
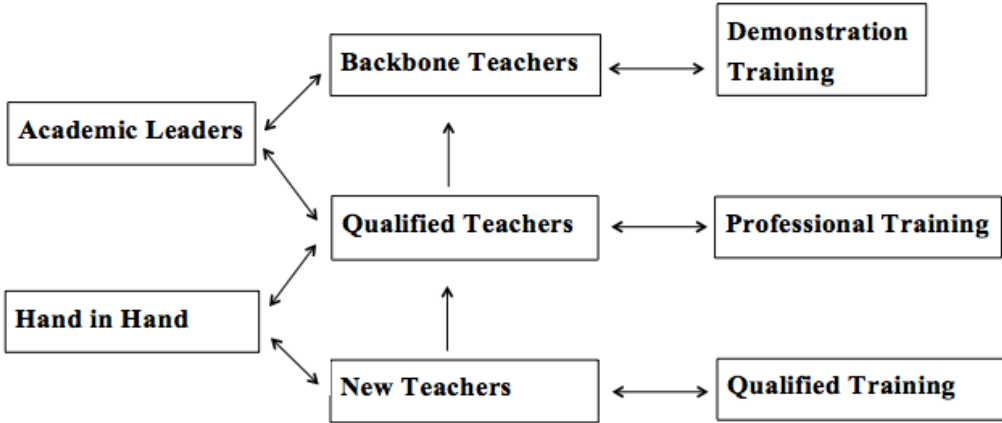
Figure 6: The figure of Teachers Echelon

We should adhere to the hierarchical training of teachers. First of all, teaching and research led to the growth of teachers. Through the forms like teachers' self-evaluation, mutual evaluation, teaching managers and preschool education expert comments etc., teachers should promoted to change their educational concepts, update their educational behaviors and improve their teaching level. Secondly, we should improve the system of teacher training and evaluation so as to build a suitable platform for teachers of different levels.

Research Prospect

Our research can be done further :

Firstly, the ecological education curriculum can effectively make use of the home and community resources to expand children's knowledge and experience, to observe, learn in nature, communicate into the community, interact in the society .So the curriculum is developing and propagable. More kindergartens should pay attention to the children's learning needs, fully develop and utilize all kinds of educational resources, try to form an ecological curriculum with kindergarten characteristics.

Secondly, to improve the "weak" teachers through targeted training and help each of them to explore his potential to develop curriculum; to give them professional guidance and carry out solid educational practice research. Therefore, to form more education wisdom, so as to guide and support children's learning effectively.

Thirdly, to provide scientific management constantly. The construction of kindergarten-based Ecological Education Program is a systematic project, which requires unified coordination of multiple departments. In order to avoid the disorder or random process，the kindergarten management should work at the construction of Kindergarten-based Ecological Education Program with developing perspectives, and then to seek professional guidance for the curriculum development direction and protection.

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NEW VIEWS ON THE CULTURE OF KINDERGARTEN-SCHOOL-FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

Anka Jurčević Lozančić

Abstract

A partnership is not a starting point for interrelationships, instead, it is a process that marks a comprehensive, processual and contextual view of relationships based on the mutual recognition and sharing of common goals for the benefit of a child. Although both preschool and primary school teachers are aware of the importance of the kindergarten-school-family partnership, the existing pedagogical practices show that they have certain expectations or attitudes, and sometimes even myths or misconceptions about parents, which badly influences the development and improvement of partnerships. Preschool and primary school teachers whose attitudes are positive, successfully initiate partnerships with partners and together they build a collaborative atmosphere and culture of the institution. This research investigated attitudes and opinions of primary school and preschool teachers regarding the most effective forms of collaboration with parents, as well as possible difficulties in establishing collaboration and suggestions for improving collaboration with parents. Participants of the research conducted for the purposes of this paper were preschool teachers (N-110) and primary school teachers (N-110) from the area of Sisak and Petrinja.

Key words: kindergarten and school culture, preschool teachers, parents, primary school teachers

Introduction

Partnership or collaboration is at the heart of many studies carried out both in our country and in the world – collaboration and quality relationship between parents and educational institutions have proven to be the most important factor of advancement and success of the child (Epstein, 2001; Ljubetić, 2014; Maleš, 1996; Woodhead, 2005). The prerequisites for achieving a quality partnership are mutual respect and acceptance, equality, active listening, two-way communication, responsibility, and the participants' desire, energy and time invested in achieving the set goal. In this sense, Ljubetić (2014) defines partnership as the highest level of collaborative relationship between individuals from the family community, kindergartens, and schools, aimed at finding a solution, or a new common starting point. In other words, partnership implies acknowledging the needs and rights of children and families, including the right to mutual respect of opinions, active participation, joint decision-making, and taking responsibility (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2008; Dusi., 2012; Mlinarević & Marušić, 2005). This being said, it can be concluded that partnership is a continuous process based on mutual and authentic respect. Preschool and primary school teachers are expected to understand and know how to establish a relationship characterized by trust, closeness, and acceptance with parents, to align expectations, norms, and requirements set before them and parents, which conditions them to apply contemporary educational practices of partnership in the direct pedagogical practice. Scientific (and real-life) examples show that the partnership between educational institutions and families needs to be developed from the children's earliest days in educational institutions (Jurčević Lozančić, 2005; Ljubetić, 2014). Positive experiences of the partnership between preschool teachers and parents affects parents in a way that they will try to establish similar partnership with schools, or primary school teachers. The aim of this is to emphasize the importance of continuity in education, and to enable each child to develop in the environment in which he or she feels accepted, satisfied, and happy, and which has a stimulating effect on the development of his or her natural abilities and possibilities. Contemporary evaluation studies on the effects of early and preschool education in institutions clearly point to the long-term impact of preschool programs in which parents have had a significant role. For example, the conclusions of the EPPE study (according to Jurčević Lozančić, 2016), inter alia, emphasize the significance of partnerships in which parents have the right not only to be informed about the goals and outcomes of early institutional education, but also to actively participate in that process. Furthermore, it is necessary that the preschool and primary school teachers accept and respect the parents as equal members (partners) who, with their distinctiveness, culture, and potentials, continuously add to the quality of their coexistence (Maleš, 2015).

Obstacles to family-school-kindergarten partnership and how to overcome them

Although many books, studies, and professionally popular papers on the significance of partnerships and educational practices have been written over the last few decades, the existing practice has shown that establishing and improving of the partnerships is conditioned by the expectations or attitudes of individual practitioners about the parents. The bridge towards the partnership between schools and families is based on the teachers' knowledge, skills, and beliefs acquired during their professional training, which are continuously supplemented in the process of further professional development, as well as parents' efforts to, with the help of teachers, improve their parental and communication competences (more about it: Babić, Irović & Krstović, 1997). Educational institutions need to respond to the challenges of modern society and become communities in which all subjects learn, change, and develop (Stoll & Fink, 2000). The development of professional collaborative relationships with parents is based on joint planning, division of responsibility, and continuous communication in a positive atmosphere of mutual trust, respect, and shared professional vision for children and adults. In the formation of a learning community, where collaboration and partnership play an important role, the roles of all subjects of the educational process are changed: those of students, teachers, parents, and professional associates. Contemporary modalities of partnerships include frequent informing (brochures, flyers, Internet communication, workshops, discussion groups, etc.), as well as pedagogical training for the parents. Basically, there are studies that have shown that listening and responding to the specific needs, concerns, and dilemmas that parents have, adequately and in time, offering help in linking the parents with the education of their children contributes to and develops a higher level of the parents' responsibility, while simultaneously strengthening the sense of belonging to the community (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2008; Dusi, 2012; Maleš, 2015, and many others). For these reasons, the family, educational institutions, and the social community need to be perceived as interrelated systems that are in constant interaction.

Research

The aim of this research was to see what the attitudes and opinions of preschool and primary school teachers are regarding existing forms of collaboration with parents, as well as to look at the possible difficulties they face, and suggestions for improving collaboration with parents. Participants of this research were preschool teachers (N-110) and primary school teachers (N-110) from the area of Sisak and Petrinja. For the purposes of this research, a Questionnaire was created, in which the first part collected general data on the subjects (gender, length of service, professional qualifications). The second part of the Questionnaire included open type questions about the collaboration between the kindergarten,

school, and parents, based on the opinions of preschool and primary school teachers. The research was conducted in May 2017.

Research results and interpretation of the results

The first part of the Questionnaire regarded general data on the respondents:

110 preschool teachers and 110 primary school teachers participated in this research. Analysis of the data obtained shows that the preschool teachers are mostly female, N-109 (99.1%), while there was only one male teacher, N-1 (0.9%). Female gender is also prevalent among primary school teachers (N-106 (96.4%), while there is a significantly smaller number of persons of male gender N-4 (3.6%).

Regarding the length of service of the respondents, N-47 preschool teachers have more than 21 years of work experience (42.7%), N-26 preschool teachers have from 11 to 15 years of work experience (23.6%), N-10 preschool teachers have from 6 to 10 years of work experience (10%). Then there are N-11 preschool teachers with 2 to 5 years of work experience (10%), and N-5 preschool teachers with up to 1 year of work experience (4.5%). Data on the primary school teachers' length of service show that N-55 primary school teachers (50%) have more than 21 years of work experience, then there are N-17 primary school teachers with 16 to 20 years of work experience (15.5%), N-15 teachers have from 11 to 15 years of work experience (13.6%), while only N-2 teachers (1.8%) have less than one year of work experience.

Picture 1.
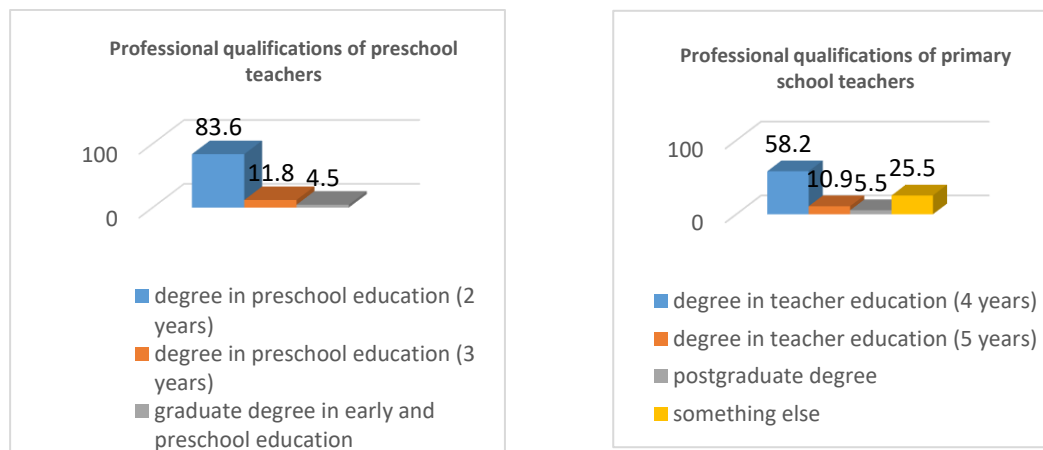
As can be seen from the pictures (no 1.), the questions regarding professional qualifications show that a total of N-92 preschool teachers (83.6%) have a 2-year degree in preschool education, a total of N-13 preschool teachers (11.8%) have a 3-year degree in preschool education, while N-5 preschool teachers (4.5%) have a graduate (5-year) degree in early and preschool education. As for the primary school teachers, questions show that N-64 primary school teachers (58.2%) have completed a 4-year degree in

teacher education, N-12 teachers (10.9%) have completed a 5-year degree in teacher education, N-6 teachers (5.5%) have postgraduate degrees, while N-28 teachers (25.5%) have finished something else.

The second part of the Questionnaire gave answers to the following questions.

First question: ***Have you passed a course on collaboration between families and kindergarten or school during your initial education?***

Picture 2.
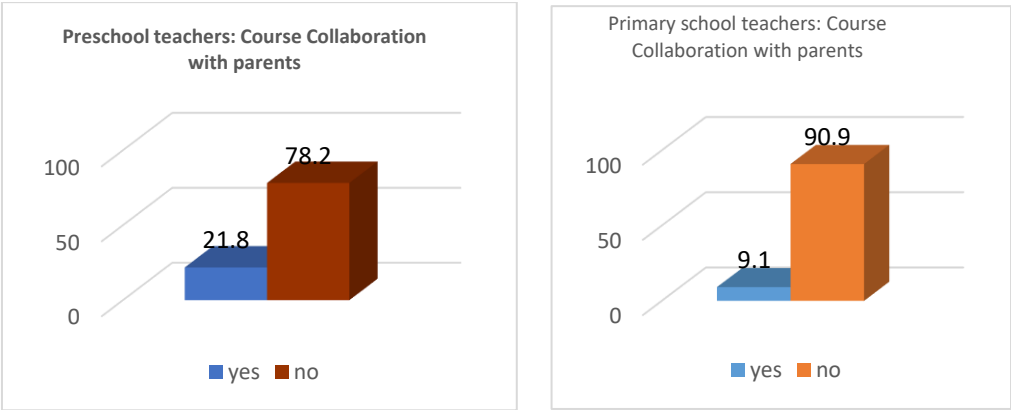
As can be seen from the image data (no. 2), N-24 (21.8) preschool teachers opted for the YES category, while N-86 preschool teachers (78.2%) opted for the NO category. Furthermore, N-100 primary school teachers (90.9%) did not take or pass the course on school-kindergarten-family collaboration during their initial education, while N-10 teachers (9.1%) did take the abovementioned course during their initial education.

Picture 3.

Second question: Do you think that your initial education prepared you for working with parents?
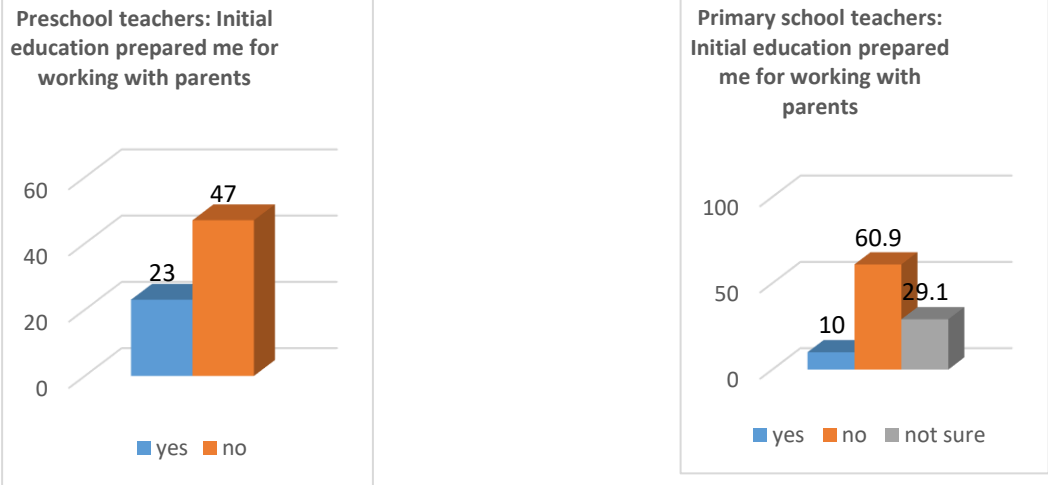
According to the schematic representations on the images (no. 3), most preschool teachers believe that the existing education did not prepare them for working with parents (N-52 preschool teachers, 47.3%), while N-25 preschool teachers (22.7%) believe that the existing education did prepare them for working with parents. However, N-33 preschool teachers are indecisive about making this evaluation (they have chosen the category *I neither agree nor disagree*). On the same question, N-67 primary school teachers (60.9%) have opted for the NO category, while N-11 primary school teachers (10.0%) have said YES, and 32 primary school teachers (29.1%) are indecisive about this and have chosen the category *I neither agree nor disagree*.

Third question of the Questionnaire: Have you received help from a professional associate in your work with parents and children? A total of N-100 preschool teachers have answered affirmatively (90.9%), while N-10 (9.1%) preschool teachers answered negatively. The largest number of primary school teachers, N-78, (70.9%) have received help from a professional associate, while N-32 primary school teachers (29.1%) have not received any help from a professional associate.

Picture 4.

Fourth question: Have you, after finishing your formal education, had any further professional training regarding collaboration with parents?
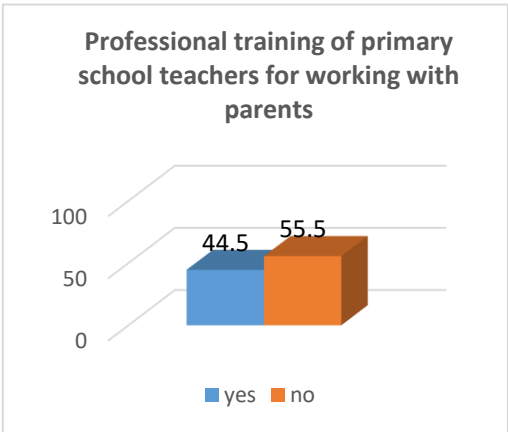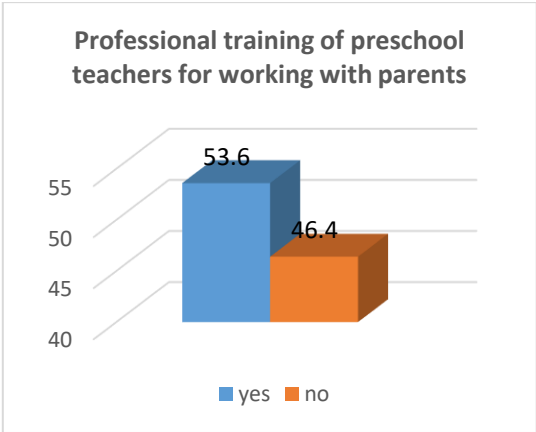
The results are at the same time similar and different. For example, N-59 preschool teachers (53.6%) answered affirmatively, while N-51 preschool teachers (46.4%) have not had any further professional training concerning this problem. To the same question, N-61 primary school teachers (55.5%) stated that they have not attended professional seminars on collaboration, while N-49 primary school teachers (44.5%) stated that they have attended seminars on collaboration between parents and kindergarten and school.

Picture 5.

Fifth question: Specify the form of collaboration that you find the most useful in collaboration with parents.
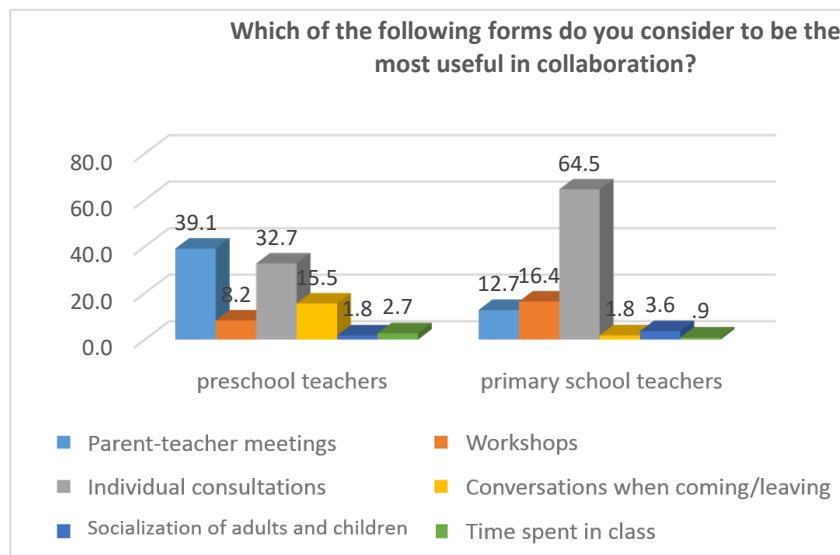
Communication with parents, for example parent-teacher meetings, workshops with parents, individual consultations and informal social gatherings are the key to achieving a partnership. Through these forms of collaboration, information is being exchanged, attitudes, values, and expectations are being agreed on, and differences are being accepted. The professional literature lists various types of parent-teacher meetings. Answers in which we tried to find out where we stand as practitioners are visible in the selected categories of preschool and primary school teachers. According to the primary school teachers' opinions (64.5%), the most desirable forms of collaboration are individual consultations with the parents. Teachers emphasize that in meetings with parents they can more efficiently exchange information and opinions on all relevant problems and issues, as well as find solutions as to how they can accomplish more in educational sense. At the same time, this is an opportunity for the teacher to get better acquainted with educational, cultural, sociological, material, emotional, and other needs of the family, and hence the needs of the child. There are numerous examples in pedagogical practice (confirmed by scientific research) that in individual communication environments, a positive mutuality is more commonly achieved, not only in terms of information, but also in terms of operation (Jurčević Lozančić, 2005; Ljubetić, 2014; Maleš, 1996). Furthermore, as can be seen in the image data (no. 5), thematic or informative *parent-teacher meetings* are preferred by more preschool teachers (39.1%), and less primary school teachers (12.7%). As for the *workshop*-type collaboration which helps build partnership with families and ensures optimum support for the child's developmental and educational needs, (8.2%) of the preschool teachers consider it to be the best form of collaboration, as well as (16.4%) of the primary school teachers. *Socialization of adults and children* is preferred by (1.8%) of preschool teachers. *Spontaneous conversations* during the arrival of the

child from the educational group or class have been chosen by (15.5%) preschool teachers, and (1.8%) of primary school teachers. *Time spent in the educational group or class* has been chosen by (2.7%) of preschool teachers, and only one primary school teacher (0.9%).

Seventh question (open type): What do you think might represent a problem in establishing collaboration with parents? Teachers warn of the lack of time and frequently present problem which implies finding an adequate common meeting time that works well for both teachers and parents. The following examples illustrate response categories selected by teachers: "… *parents' disinterest for participation…*" …"*parents are burdened with existential problems, they are always in a hurry…*"… "*parents are looking for a collaboration… they come only when there are problems…*" According to their opinion, collaboration between teachers and parents should take place in a pleasant atmosphere that is pervaded with information on the child's progress and is not only initiated in crises, when concerning behaviors occur. Besides, primary school teachers think that parents do not take advice and suggestions that teachers give into account, and that they have too high expectations, that is, they overestimate their child's abilities. For example there is a statement …"*parents aren't ready for collaboration…*" They warn of a lack of communication due to the introduction of *E-Registry*, i.e. a non-objective understanding of the information transmitted through social networks that parents can access at any time. Although communication via electronic mail is a common form of exchanging information because it is faster and takes less time, whether this method of collaboration is in the function of pedagogical assistance to students and parents is still an open question, teachers believe. In seeking answers to the aforementioned question, preschool teachers warn of the closed nature of some parents in terms of communication, which causes a mismatch between educational work and parenting. "…*sometimes, parents don't want to share information about their child with their preschool teacher …*" By analyzing the collected answers, it is possible to see that preschool teachers also warn of the lack of the parents' time and their extended working hours "… *parents are too busy*" …"*children spend more and more time in the kindergarten…*"…" *the child is the least with the parents in the family*"…" For the aforementioned (and many other reasons), parents transfer the responsibility for raising of their children to the kindergarten, they seek protection of their rights, but show less responsibility, which probably results from the parents' busy life and stress, preschool teachers believe. This makes the day-to-day work of preschool teachers more demanding because of the increasing expectations, as well as the need to expand the preschool teacher's knowledge and taking new forms of responsibility. Preschool and primary school teachers express their dissatisfaction with the professional training seminars especially because of their transmission work, which is particularly evident in the statement of one preschool teacher …" *I often get disappointed when*

I get back from these seminars. I have suppressed many of them because they didn't give me an answer to the problems of practice and collaboration with parents…"

Eighth question (open type): What are, according to your opinion, the suggestions for establishing collaboration with parents?

Suggesting improvements to collaboration with parents, preschool and primary school teachers emphasize the importance of mutual, open, and honest communication, and, in accordance with the above, the significance of coordination of the time spent together during which partnership and collaboration occur, free from stress and hurriedness. In addition, they consider it extremely important to organize educational workshops for parents and thus raise the parents' level of pedagogical culture, to include parents according to their competences and interests into outdoor teaching sessions or as guests in the educational group/class or participating in projects involving the local community. The analysis of the collected data has determined that during the preparation and conduct of the parent-teaching meetings, preschool and primary school teachers suggest the selection of topics that will attract the parents' attention and meet their needs and interests, because, according to one of the preschool teachers*…"only a concerned and motivated parent becomes a partner"…* Given the complexity and sensitivity of the needs of modern families in the preparation, monitoring, and evaluation of parent-teacher meetings, preschool teachers emphasize the help of the members of the professional team, depending on the topic of the meeting. For example, the statement*…"more frequent organization of workshops for concrete problems with the guidance of professional associates…"* The following statement of one primary school teacher supports this: *„…From the very beginning, I had a good collaboration with the school's pedagogue, which helped me a lot because I, through conversations, learned how to behave and in react in certain situation with parents"…* Primary school teachers particularly emphasize the importance of continuity and communication with parents which needs to be established at the very beginning of the school year, and not as it commonly happens, when a problem or difficulty arises. Research by Miljević-Riđički, Pahić & Vizek Vidović (2011) also shows that collaborative forms that prevail in pedagogical practice, in which the responsibility for education of children is most often left to the educational institution, are mainly focused on solving a particular problem. As it has been said, preschool and primary school teachers warn of insufficiently developed competences needed for collaboration with parents, and, as a solution, suggest the importance of empowerment in the leadership role by strengthening their competences for teamwork and listening skills and communication. For example, the statement*…" more frequent organization of workshops with preschool teachers in which they would learn about the methods of successful communication…"* Furthermore, preschool and primary school teachers warn of a large number of children in educational groups/classes, and think that a smaller number of children in an

educational group/class would definitely contribute to establishing a partnership because then, the teachers could more successfully give their attention individually to each parent.

Final considerations

Partnership is a harmonious relationship between all those who have a common task, which in this case is education and upbringing of children. At the same time, it is a process in which all subjects have equal opportunities to learn and develop their professional and personal competences. It is therefore necessary to cultivate a mutual understanding and support which opens the way for the development of a partnership culture in which parents become more satisfied and surer of their parenting, and preschool and primary school teachers become more open to new relationships and knowledge about the child's needs and possibilities. The culture of a school or kindergarten needs to be viewed as a total achievement of a community… "which considers that continuous research of educational practice leads to its deeper understanding and change, requiring a continuous two-way communication and reciprocal relationships between children and adults, and emphasizes the importance of coexistence and dialogue among all participants" (Vujičić, 2011, p. 19). This implies the implementation of appropriate forms of communication as well as those that are adapted to the needs of modern families, which enables educational institutions and families to meet in the environment of dialogue and joint meetings. The partnership of school and kindergarten is conditioned by the teacher's knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired during their professional education and which have continuously been improved during their further professional training, as well as on parents' efforts to, with the help of preschool or primary school teacher, improve their parental and pedagogical competences. However, as the results of this research show, there are obstacles or barriers that can can occur in the way of developing a partnership, for example attitudes on values, busyness and the lack of time, the lack of confidence and competences or unrealistic expectations by parents, preschool and primary school teachers. Consequently, it is undisputed that the initial education and constant professional development should enable the development of competences that qualify preschool and primary school teachers for partnership with parents. The results of this research are just the first step in the modernization of existing preschool and primary school education programs, as well as the incentive for the development of professional training seminars that will enable the acquisition of new competences and development of existing competences necessary for partnership with parents.

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THE CONCEPT OF PLAY/PLAYING FROM PERSPECTIVE OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

Dušan Kostrub, Eva Severini, Jana Kropáčková

Abstract

The scientific study presents results of research of the concept of play/playing in aspect of kindergarten' teachers; analyzes principle of spontaneous and controlled play. Play is the main formative childhood activity, as well as a means for a child to acquire diverse learning experiences. Play/playing eliminates superiority in knowledge, because during play knowledge is mutually formed together between the playing subjects. Play provokes intelligence while acting and operating subjects in terms of their further development. Our study focuses on differentiate misunderstandings use of plays in the process of education of highlighting the specifics through professional essays. We used simultaneously conceptual maps and interviews with research subjects. The research was carried out using a qualitative methodology in order to identify specific educational events related to play. The determining factors were the mental representations of the research subjects – kindergarten's teachers. It is also a comparative scientific study because research participants were involved from the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic. Research design, its implementation and the conditions were equal for both countries involved in the research. Comprehensive research material was subjected to qualitative analysis using the method of constant comparison, while integrating categories and their properties and providing the theory. The aim of this scientific study is to present two different concepts of the play/playing.

Keywords: *play/playing; spontaneous play; controlled play; kindergarten teachers; qualitative methodology*

Introduction

The play is an excellent didactic tool in the pre-primary education. It is the pre-primary education that is characterized by the fact that it is possible to realize teaching as play and teaching as a project, not excluding that teaching as a project cannot be built on playing. The goal of the play/playing in pre-primary education is to develop the creative capacity of the child and the joy of acquiring the knowledge in teaching experiences in education. The play in pre-primary education is the content of all activities and has the character of development activity. It is precisely the specificity of these stages that makes it possible to combine both concepts in one, and thus to implement them equally in pre-primary education. The play represents a typical didactic structure, e.g. play as an experiment, play as a project. It is also a time for a child, it is a child's time – it is a spontaneous (free) play. It is a didactic tool for teaching educational content. Slovak and Czech didactics are historically conditioned by J. A. Komensky's *"Learning by playing"* concept. Play as an experiment – the child/children experiment together with the learning topic (educational content, subject matter) with the teacher's support. Play as a project – the child/children realize the project and process the teaching subject (educational content, subject matter) with the teacher's support. The play as an experiment and a play as a project means letting children *discover* the nature of the learning topic (educational content, subject matter) and, at the same time, to *promote them in discovery.*

The child is drawn and motivated by a play (so called spontaneous) (see also Suchánková, 2014; Kikušová & Kostrub, 2014; 2011), which is the first two principles of the success of his learning. In supporting of cognitive development of a child by using play/playing in education, the teacher facilitates development itself and encourages the development of the child to play the game. The teacher creates a didactically conditioned learning environment and the play has not only a personal sense for the child (that the child is playing), but also the meaning that the child learns by play and the child is taught through the play. The teacher is not only an animator of a child's play, but he/she is a teammate in the process of education. He/she is one (but not the only) of the initiators, when considering how the started play unfolds, in which environment, etc. The teacher in the playing is not in the position of the leader (as in a controlled play), who controls the play, nor in the position of "adult and serious", who determines what to do and not to do at a certain point in time and how to do it. For the teacher, it is important from a didactic point of view what and why (in terms of child's development and learning content) is going on in the play. If the teacher recognizes this (identified it with his/her position as a playmate in the play and diagnosed it with participatory observation), he/she can naturally support children in their orientation in the learning topic, give them a variety of ideas, and animate their play with his/her entry into the play itself. To preserve the teacher´s position of the animator – stimulator of a child's play and a teammate, the following elements

should be ensured (also see: Kikušová & Králiková, 2004; Kostrub & Severini & Mahrer Milovčíková, 2016; 2014):

1) *Space plays design* – the classroom is structured into learning areas, but it can be integrated and used as a big playing room for the purpose of playing. As well as structured cultural and discourse practices of adult life, it is possible to structure a play that will take into account the adequate space for their development. The corresponding space for the play is not only a safe, stable and peaceful space but it is a space for a natural, free/unrestricted play of children together with a teacher. Outdoors are naturally used for playing, for which the same requirements apply to the conditions for the play/playing.

2) *Play material* – choosing the right material for play/playing must be done very responsibly and must be consistent with security, cultural, developmental and didactic requirements. Didactically desirable is to choose play material that promotes divergent thinking, competences and creativity in terms of educational content and playing children themselves.

3) *Structuring and organizing the play time* – every child needs a free/unrestricted play (self-organized), but also a play organized with other children as well as with a teacher (a jointly managed play). The authors of this scientific study in qualitative research found that the play of a child with peers in a play group in education lasts longer (than a managed play), is more productive for actions and plays results of children and, together with the individual play of each child, makes it possible to develop more effectively self-regulation mechanisms. At the same time, each child has the opportunity to incorporate its benefits and personal experiences into the play, making the play more structured in terms of cultural and discourse practices. Therefore, the teacher handles the time allowance for the children's play so that children have the opportunity to try different – adequate for them – forms of play/playing. Enough time is another didactic imperative; learning – also by the form of playing – cannot be arbitrarily restricted from the outside even by a teacher. Either the kids are playing or they are in the full organization of the teacher by outside.

4) *Teacher's attitudes to play/playing* – the teacher tries to develop a series of attitudes in his/her role as a teammate. He/she has to take a judicious attitude, the attitude of a skillful observer, as well as a helpful and open attitude to identify the attitudes of the children that are taught by the play. This includes:

a. Accepting children´s mistakes, mistakes in the play by providing situational feedback through a teacher's action in the role of a teammate. At the same time, the teacher more accurately diagnoses the achieved developmental level of children, because through mistakes, errors of children in their play action, qualitative changes can be registered in their development.

b. Creating (together with children) a positive and adequate play climate. The child has the need to play freely, not with the knowledge of the obligation – the regulation from outside. Plays with pre-defined rules may be interesting sometimes, but for the interpretation described here, they are useless. Rule-making plays are a "project screen" through which the development of individual stages can be identified in the relevant dimensions. The basis for creating and maintaining positive playing/learning climate is that the teacher understands and applies the concept of interpersonal understanding. A friendly, partnership climate with the storage of permissible personal distances is the responsibility of the teacher. The teacher, given that the child should be aware of itself – as it is in the play, and must see that the teacher is concerned about his teaching through the play.

c. Taking a place of the active listener and the initiator of a proper dialogue in the play. The communication in play in education is open, free communication, but it is also a verbalization of experience, a thematic; it is a real discourse (debate with argument in roles). The goal is to understand and to be understood in the play.

d. Do not expect ready answers, ready solutions. The child in the play gets the space to discover what he/she did not catch in the previous proceedings, or he/she did not have the opportunity to spot and discover it by doing it. The child has the ability to check how interaction can be done with objects and subjects in the play, and suggests possible strategies for the play. Self-motivation and involvement of a child in a play/playing is very effective and associates with significant learning in collaborating with other subjects.

e. Do not accelerate play development. The teacher should respect the sequence of play/playing – he/she should support rather finding adequate forms of development of the child in the play.

f. Offer opportunities for success in the play. The child needs the intention to play and to be "assured" by adults that it is something significant. Didactically justifiable playing situations increase self-esteem by allowing the child to accept as an independent, competent, autonomous and self-sufficient subject.

g. Proven care and the teacher's interest in asking questions, introducing ideas and recommendations in offering opportunities to try something, experiment and practice their own initiatives.

The play (so called spontaneous) is a preparation for adult life (see also: Opravilová & Kropáčková, 2016; Severini, 2016); it is a basic didactic tool, which in a way is the language of children and adults, allowing the development of thinking and speech in interaction. A child in a play has natural space for a (self) presentation and a teacher has the space to teach what he/she needs to teach. Play/playing excludes superiority in knowledge, as in the play there is mutual knowledge and mutual formation among the playing subjects. The play provokes intelligence by acting and operating subjects in terms of its further development. In the play an individual (and socially conditioned) experience (as cultural contents in the

minds of the subjects) is provoked in terms of its further restructuring. From the moment of provocation of intelligence and provocation of personal experience, the personality of the child is constructed – its identity, autonomy, competences, and so on. This construction is basically a social construct, because it is knowingly done by teachers in a playing – learning group of active children. Teacher realizes that in play-based learning is supportive to create constructive, non-aggressive relationships with playing children and together develop critical aspects of play information. Optimal play management is an indirect didactic intervention for playing children, in which the teacher is a teammate presenting the model of the play, but leaves space for independent, solo action and children´s activity. Autonomous, independent and self-sufficient action and children´s activity indirectly but deliberately supported by teacher enables the development of self-regulation mechanisms of child/children using cultural and discourse practices in adapting to society's socio-cultural systems. Cultural and discourse practices are cultural tools for the development of individuals and groups in the sociocultural dimension of society. These are steady practices in acting, working and communicating. Our sociocultural dimension is indicative of the fact that people are teaming together to communicate, to engage in diverse activities and to share (jointly and mutually) different activities. Bindings of facts above are typical discursive (communication based on debate, argumentation) and cultural (implementation of targeted and prominent activities) practices. The school (school educational context) has the role to play in its social role in developing the cultural literacy of younger generations and the advent of young generations into the relevant culture is done through the realization of discursive and cultural practices adapted to the level of the younger generation. In the process of en-culture the game plays a significant role, playing as the main formatting activity (of childhood). It is an illustration of reality, but also a double declension from reality. It allows reality to zoom in and symbolically represent it. The progression of learning through the play makes it possible to deviate from reality and to approach it in such a way that it is represented as one of the possibilities of reality by playing subjects. They are a changes of the form of looking at reality, thinking about it and acting in it, but these are only partial forms of complex action. Critical change (as evidence of learning) requires contrast, plurality of alternatives, change of form of view and position. Then, in the play, a basic framework for essential models of cultural and discourse practices that people use to understand and intervene in their personal, social and professional lives is constituted.

Optimal management of the so-called spontaneous play, to make the play a didactically effective – as well as the educational process – has to be planned, properly implemented, controlled and evaluated. Optimal management of this play allows the child/children to decide, choose, agree on the play, with partners – teammates, play material, these all in accordance with the formation of their arguments relating to the subject of the play as well as the context of the play. The teacher therefore has in a spontaneous play to:

1. Know the characteristics of children and diagnose the level of the play.

2. Know the level of children in the preparatory phase of the play (which the teacher learns through the analysis of the behavior and the children's actions in previous plays in education).

3. Perform preparatory play activities such as thematic conversations, gathering information from various media, theme-related visits and excursions, research activities etc.).

4. Keep the play continuum. Take and play the play in a continuity of topic, time, content, avoid discontinuity. Prevent disruption of children's concentration in the play, avoiding the effects that would end untimely and inappropriately the play.

5. Consider options for play and complementary material that children can use in the play.

6. Evaluate the processes develop in play.

7. Analyze in-play forming children's arguments in correspondence with their educational interests and educational contents (curriculum). Forming arguments arise as a consequence of applied cultural and discourse practices; it is also a consequence of collaborative learning in the learning playing group.

The preparatory phase of so-called spontaneous play begins with an initiation conversation connected with a topic that allows children to decide what will be the subject of the play, with whom they will play, what they will use in the play, etc. The considerations that will arise in the initiation conversation and on which the group agrees, the teacher records on the flipchart placed on a visible place for children (this is an external mediator to support self-regulation mechanisms). Teachers together with children also deals with arguments related to the subject of the play, not only to recognize them, but especially for children to be aware of them. Teacher suggests to children to create a conceptual map related to the subject of the play. In this model, the pretended roles are applied by playing subjects. Therefore, in the initiating conversation the played roles and the associated cultural and discursive practices are also discussed. When roles are taken over by playing children, the activities binding to them are joined with a learning content in an initiating discussion. A teacher is a person who realizes what children have to do and what will result from that. He/she is responsible for the content and, in particular, how they will be contacted. These thoughts that children produce in the initial discussion are inspiration and challenge for the teacher. Play/playing is used in education with pedagogical-didactic intent, and therefore it must provide real learning experience to children; there are various demonstrations of action and arguments in it, and the teacher and the children knowingly organize the play framework. Teacher is mindful of a variety of strategies that make it easier for the play to develop accordingly. Inside the strategy, the teacher pays attention to use of indications, demonstrating the procedure, asking questions, supporting arguments, recommendations, giving advice, managing the conversation. Control of the play takes place throughout the play process by various procedures. The teacher controls the character of cultural and discourse

practices, the trajectory of the content of the whole play process, the play context, the use of play symbols by children, the acting and influencing of playing children, the positive and negative qualities of the play, the present conflicts in the play etc. The spontaneous play evaluation is indispensable for a teacher – professional and research, who wishes to know and understand not only the educational process itself, but also their consequences. However, the idea of evaluation is very diffuse and ambiguous in terms of playing processes; hence it is a topic with which it is freely and openly handled according to certain criteria and personal interests. It is important to evaluate the proposed playing goals by children in this model of learning. It is also necessary to evaluate the content, context of the play, including the formed arguments based on applied cultural and discourse practices by children; this evaluation is about the interaction of the teacher and the playing children. Evaluating of the reached development level is again a question of teacher's duty. Based on the preference of the authors of this study, the concept of evaluation is synonymous with development, improvement and enhancement. By accepting this allows us to focus fundamentally on the process of learning (learning and teaching others). The teacher is supposed to observe playing children and the play itself, not only in terms of learning and playful goals, but also to estimate the motive of playing action of children and their association with cultural and discourse practices of adults. Observation has clearly a diagnostic character. The teacher observes to understand what, how and why is done in the play/playing in terms of learning and playing goals and educational content in comparison with the achieved level of children´s development. The identification of the proximal development zone is the most important in this teacher's observation. The teacher in the play itself – unless he/she is an equivalent teammate – intervenes only if it is necessary because of the safety aspect. Pedagogical intervention in the play is also justified in the emergence of conflicts, the supply of play material, access to digital technologies, etc. The teacher observes the ways of playing actions of children, but he/she can only evaluate them when the play ends; when children talk about the play, when they can describe to teacher how they played and what they reached with the play. The verbalization process is a discursive practice through which children can explain what character the play had, what happened, what changes were made to it, what changes were made during play, and what the play brought to each of its participants. One of the basic questions of didactics is whether it is possible to regulate the play. An adequate answer is "no". The number of variables that need to be considered when planning a play is immense. It is often a problem for the teacher to connect the play/playing of the children with the educational content (curriculum), so that the play itself is not a "play" of repetition, exercise – some "consolidation". Playing of children does not have a repetitive (repeated reproduction of activities) character, so the play is contrary to the memory-reproductive learning of children. Keeping in mind the fact that playing with children is a creative expression and play allows to develop creativity, then the teacher cannot plan the play of the children in the play, but he/she should plan to link learning content to

be present in the play of children. From aspect of didactic categories there are learning objectives, play objectives, educational content, time spent with playing, space for playing, play materials, requisites, etc. The teacher not only needs to know the play, to understand the playing, to be able to play with children, but also the play and playing present to children as a teammate, who, a symbolic world of adults, naturally – with his play actions – interconnects with the children's universe. As it cannot be taught what a teacher does not know, what he/she does not understand, it cannot be taught by a play without the teacher playing with the children or without his/her attitude of playing a play of what is happening in the play of education. Teacher does not have to motivate children to play, children can handle it by themselves, the teacher (but) needs to know the theme that dominates the children's play, because he/she can only understand the behavior and influence of children in the play. Playing, as an activity that promotes and displays cultural and discursive practices in adults' life, develops the intelligence of children. The teacher should identify and understand the difference and comparison between children's play and culture as a form of play/playing of children. Playing is a specific "speech" of children (through which the child's significant activity is constituted and the child's activity is applied), thanks to which transforms the imagination of the child's universe into the reality of the adults' world. Playing – supported by a teacher – is actually an indirect, but deliberately managed participation, one of which goals is to support the interiorization processes. Playing has the advantage that managed participation as a prerequisite for the success of the interiorization takes place in a joyful, happy (easy) way for the child. The naturalness of the playing indicates the nature of the child, which is another prerequisite for the development of the child. Therefore, playing of a child is a cultural activity that develops its intelligence. The child learns to understand the world by playing – it creates an individualized compromise with reality. As child constructs phenomena, events, ideas, knowledge, beliefs, then he/she presents them in the play. The first manifestations of the association of culture and intelligence in the early phases of an individual's life are presented through playful forms of action and working. By playing, the child coordinates thinking, reasoning, transforms itself into a social being, and thus tries to gradually become a member of the community. Mental creative activity developed by the play engages creativity, imagination, exploration with discovery and communication. When a child plays, it creates things, objects, creates situations and looks for solutions to the various problems that are initiated through plays, playing. Mainly, relationships are created with other children (and teacher) during the play.

The play is one of the basic needs of an individual in all societies and it does not have to be defended by other reasons, because in the world today, individuals who motivate themselves are needed.

Qualitative methodology as a basis for the realization of our research

The methodology of qualitative research with a corresponding design was preferred to process our issue. Qualitative research is an opportunity to think of human's behavior and thinking in different dimensions

that are at variance with the concept of quantitative exploration (e.g. Wittrock, 1989, p. 114). It allows a relativistic view (vision/perspective) of the world, individual, society, life, etc. It starts from a paradigm – sociocritical (a posteriori). The main features of qualitative research are intensity and long duration, detailed recording, audio and video recordings are made, and almost everything that happens in a particular environment is observed. The decision for this type of research came from the awareness that the studied phenomena are under the angle of human, who influences the choice of methodology and influences the overall character of the study.

The research problem in our research focuses on not accepting the concept of spontaneous play/playing in a declarative and practical – conative plane in pre-primary education by highlighting its specificity. *The aim of the research* was to identify the considerations of the research subjects that influence their actions, more precisely their inactivity in supporting spontaneous play/playing in the process of education. The selection was deliberate and a sample was made of 40 students from the Slovak Republic at the Faculty of Education at Comenius University in Bratislava and 40 students from the Czech Republic at the Faculty of Education of the Charles University in Prague in the Bachelor's study program of Pre-school and Elementary Pedagogy in Daily and External Studies. We set the following research questions: 1. *Which model of play do teachers prefer?* 2. *How do teachers define the concept of the play*? 3. *What do teachers do when kids refuse to participate in the play?* 4. *Can children change the rules of the play, when and under what conditions?* Based on the above-mentioned goal and research questions, the student was assigned the task of writing an essay (within the subject of *Playing in Education*, which was part of the student's portfolio to the subject) on the topic: *How do I explain the support of spontaneous play/playing by a teacher in the process of education?* Through the essay, we can renew living ideas of people by dialogical process through time and space. The essay allows the communication of knowledge in a participatory and open form to transcend thoughts transcendental (in the plane of imagination). Each addressed student wrote an essay with an average range of one page. Each essay was assigned a number from 1 to 40 in the country involved in the research and all essays were research material of a qualitative character. In the first phase of data analysis, we performed open coding (e.g. Strauss & Corbin, 1999), which was implemented by the "paper and pencil" method – manual coding. Coding was done with regard to research issues, with the aim of uncovering and locating key concepts. To prepared texts were written codes "stickers" that resemble a given sentence, sequence or paragraph of the sentence. We did not access to the analysis with a list of preliminary codes, they were created gradually. Subsequently, a list of codes was created and we realized retrospective reading of texts to find out which codes were repeated. We decided which concepts would be chosen for the next level of analysis. The next phase of the analysis was the search for relationships among concepts in order to create interpretative categories. The goal of our unstructured observation (without a previously prepared scheme e.g. Švec et al., 1998)

was the process of education, at kindergartens in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, and subject of our observation were kindergartens' teachers, who have experience of their own teaching practice and higher education, as well as the children in their learning/playing groups, more precisely people and their activities (activities of subjects) during the examination. Direct observation took place in the open learning environment and in the classroom of the kindergarten where we did a lots of videos, but only a few of them allowed us to observe the phenomena we were discovering and later they became subject to our indirect observation. The video recordings of the observation were translated into a written record (literal transcription) of the learning activity. The results of this combined observation were processed by the table method and graph. In connection with the making of videos, it is worthwhile to note the benefits it brings to the observer. There is a possibility of multiple playback, in which the quality of audiovisual recording allows focusing on more observed phenomena. Another advantage is the possibility of playing a learning process for purpose of the self-reflection of a teacher, where through the analysis of positive and negative phenomena the teacher gains feedback that influences the quality of his/her next lesson. Videotaping can also serve to other teachers in professional controversy and in educating teachers with innovations in the process of education, and last but not least, it can be played back to children and the teacher can use it together with children to share their assessment and reflection. The aim of our *unstructured interview* was to identify the didactic possibilities of using spontaneous play/playing in pre-primary education. The studied subjects were teachers of kindergartens in Slovakia and in the Czech Republic. The conditions and the atmosphere of the interviews were adequate and in accordance with the requirements of this form of study in the sense of the relevant methodological recommendations. Our unstructured interview (more precisely: narrative interview) was based on one main question: *What do you think are the didactic possibilities of using spontaneous play/playing in the process of education?*, from which the whole course and direction of the conversation unfolded. All interviews are recorded electronically, we have an audio recording from each meeting. Audio recording has enabled us to have a quick, quality recording of the discussion and the possibility of repeated playback and more detailed analysis (e.g. Gavora, 2007).

The triangulation was used in the study. Triangulation of theory is the analysis of data in the awareness of several emerging hypotheses and perspectives in order to develop the possibilities of creating knowledge (new theory). Triangulation of a researcher does not mean the division of research activities among several researchers, but rather a systemic comparison of different research views of the same data. Data triangulation does not mean to use of multiple methods to generate different data, but it involves analyzing or searching for the same data through a variety of methods, for example the question of synchronous and diachronic reliability (e.g. Kostrub, 2016). In order to obtain relevant information about the issue, the following methods for data acquisition were used: *essay* (gaining opinions, convictions,

explanations, knowledge of subjects involved in research related to the subject matter); *unstructured observation* (direct observation of the conversation of subjects in the education process and indirect observation of real situations in the education process); and *unstructured interview/narrative interview* (identifying reasoning and expert opinion of research entities in relation to the subject matter). The following methods were used to analyze the obtained data: 1. *open encoding method* (categorization, conceptualization and data encoding); 2*. Method of selective coding* (anchored theory, e.g. Strauss & Corbin, 1999); and 3*. Constant Comparison Method* (process of continuous creation theory e.g. Creswell, 1998).

The realized research took place in the following phases:

1. *Phase of research* (in the years 2015 – 2016) Finding of preconceptions of students about the concept and use of spontaneous play/playing with teachers (essay, direct observation) as well as reflection; To study the change of students' initial concepts in relation to the subject matter under consideration (indirect observation); Obtaining research material.

2. *Phase of research* (in the years 2016 – 2017) identifying teachers' reflections on the spontaneous play/playing by the teacher that influences their behavior, more precisely their inactivity in supporting spontaneous play/playing in the process of education (unstructured interview, indirect observation); Obtaining research material.

3. *Phase of research* (in the years 2015 – 2017) elaboration; Analyzing of acquired research material and designing didactic possibilities of using spontaneous play/playing with teachers in the process of education from the aspect of our research subjects.

Analysis and interpretation of research material

When analyzing the individual protocols of the subjects' testimonies by examining of *essays*, all their testimonies were included, and sought for the perspective of looking at the concept and using spontaneous play/playing by teacher; answers to research questions were sought. Conceptual designation was assigned to individual events, cases, and other occurrences of the phenomenon. Categories are classes of concepts that emerged when the compared concepts seemed to be part of a similar phenomenon. By open coding, the process of analyzing, examining, comparing, categorizing, encoding and conceptualizing data was implemented. In the individual protocols of the statements/interpretations, the main concepts expressed by the particular sentence (concepts) were categorized and the perspectives of the view on the possible support of spontaneous play/playing presented by teachers presented by students in Slovakia and in the Czech Republic were identified, which were used in interpretation of research results (see Scheme 1).
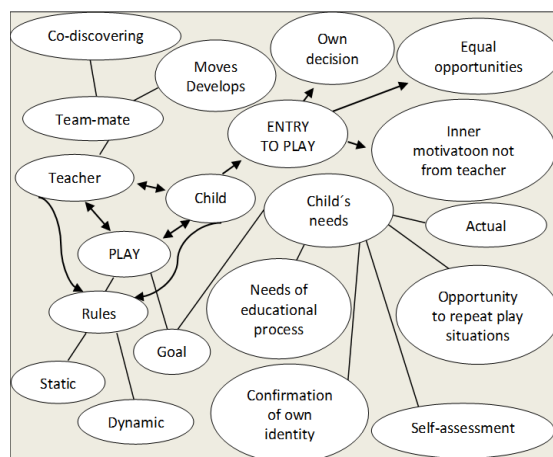
Scheme 1 *Supporting spontaneous play/playing by teachers from the point of view of research subjects.* Kostrub, Severini, Kropáčková (2015)

The method of analyzing *data from observation* consisted of analyzing the research material (description) obtained by direct and indirect observation. Events and phenomena are considered as indicators of phenomena that are marked as conceptual designation. Systematic reflection of professional situations, study of pedagogical reality and input diagnostics based on evidence in a learning/playing group were preceded by an investigation (indirect observation). The implementation of a continuous diagnosis based on evidence in the learning/playing group took place during the implementation of the education process and the output diagnosis based on the evidence in the learning/playing group took place during pedagogical reflection of the realized teaching activities. In the course of the research, a number of research material was obtained with forms of videos and pictures/photographs. In indirect observation, videos of learning activities were repeatedly played; significant elements of the didactic possibilities of promoting spontaneous play/playing by teacher were looking for. Elaboration of typology was carried out as a phase of qualitative analysis of realized qualitative research. This is a special form of description (definition) that requires purification from a large amount of material, analyzes and massive descriptions. These are forms of descriptions (including the reference frameworks), they can themselves help to understand the spheres of some social activities (e.g. Woods, 1987, p. 160). When analyzing the findings obtained from both direct and indirect observations, a reference frame was developed (see: Table 1). The registration of the research result was evaluated on the basis of the reference framework with the evaluation commentary used to interpret the research results.

Table 1 *Reference framework.* Kostrub, Severini (2016)

REFERENCE FRAMEWORK

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INTEGRATION	General framework: children are independent, they do not need help. They develop their play/playing. They act freely, at their own discretion, in accordance with the jointly created rules.
	Framework of a specific action: children invite subjects in the playing group to play, keep interaction in the play, end the play, evaluate the play separately, and provide feedback to the subjects (other children and teachers) about the play. The play is completely spontaneous.
CONTEXTUALIZATION	General framework: children begin to be independent, act partly independently, but they are not completely independent. In their playing, they turn to teachers to give them practical help. They gradually develop playing. The play is partially spontaneous.
	Framework of a specific action: children and teachers propose play conditions, during the play they ask the teacher to help them, partially evaluate the play individually and provide feedback on the play with minimal support from the teacher.
DECONTEXTUALIZATION - (socio)cognitive break -	General framework: children learn to act/work independently. They alternate help from teachers with their own independent behavior, which accuracy is verified by reassuring questions. They gradually independently develop the play/playing.
	Framework of a specific action: children try to act independently but encourage teachers to provide feedback on their actions. They act independently, but they are not independent when deciding. They wait for the teachers' opinion on what to do and/or how to do it. Teacher proposes to children the conditions of the play.
COORDINATION OF POINTS OF VIEW	General framework: children are partially dependent, they have minimal autonomy. In the most of their actions/work, they turn for help, confront their behavior with the opinion of teachers, while the teacher's opinion and choosing way/ content of play is relevant to them. They minimally develop play/playing.
	Framework of a specific action: children act/work on the basis of the opinion of the teachers and consider this opinion to be decisive. The teacher determines the specific progress of the play and at the same time encourages children to help her with it. Children are not supported in independent decision-making.
DECENTRATION	General framework: children are totally dependent, fully dependent on teacher decisions, waiting for her call and verbal and non-verbal instructions, offered samples and decisions, also done rules from outside. They wait for immediate feedback on the correctness/suitability of their actions. They do not develop play/playing.

*Framework of a specific action: the teacher determines the
conditions of the particular play and the children act according to
the pre-defined rules. Teacher's opinion is decisive for the
actions of children. Children act and decide dependently.*

When analyzing the data from an *unstructured interview* in each protocols, we focused on the frequency of the views of the kindergartens' teachers, the key concept of *what are the didactic possibilities of using spontaneous play/playing in the process of education?* Based on the analysis and open encoding of protocols, we gained the main ideas and opinions of the survey subjects that we divided into the different categories and identified the perspectives of looking at the possibilities of didactic support of spontaneous play/playing presented to teachers by teachers in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, which were used in interpreting research results (see: Scheme 3). The next phase of qualitative analysis of the obtained data in our research was the *method of constant comparison* (contrast). In applying the constant comparison method, it is not the intention to verify the universality, nor to confirm the causes or other input data. This procedure ensures the saturation of the necessary information. The goal of applying a constant comparison method is not to verify but to generate a theory. The size and saturation of the information in the text is monitored until the saturation level is reached. Using the constant comparison method, we respected the following levels: comparing events usable for a certain category; the integration of categories and their characteristics; definition of theory; conception of theory (e.g. Kolb, 2012). Also, *selective coding* was subsequently conducted as the last phase of the qualitative analysis process (the process of constructing and validating of categories, e.g. Mayan, 2001, pp. 27-31). In the research, a *deliberate support of spontaneous play/playing by teacher* was abstracted as a central category.

Interpretation of research results

The perspective of the view on the didactic possibilities of supporting spontaneous play/playing by teacher from the point of view of the subjects involved in the research is shown graphically (see Scheme 2). Teachers themselves (practitioners) were an inalienable source of knowledge, because precisely they can evaluate learning situations and the whole process of education from their point of view as somewhat unacceptable, requiring a change or requiring some practical response in the form of a corresponding solution. Reflection as feedback was essential to understanding what was done during the research. In the first place, for a description of the activities and actions of the subjects, the grouping of ideas and subsequent, more comprehensive ideas about what was experienced, what was understood, as well as analyzing the complex experience from the realization of the research and drawing conclusions from what was obtained and especially for interpreting everything that happened. Despite the fact that teachers in their interpretations emphasize the necessity of a spontaneous play/playing, but their interpretation differs

with their actions, they show signs of difference. Despite the interpretive tangle of testimony, it can not be forgotten that children are here, they are part of the adults' society they should adapt to; to develop the qualities typical of the adult population. Social responsibility (especially for parents) and the professional role (especially for teachers) is to promote spontaneous play/playing of children. Above-mentioned discrepancy in the view of the importance of this support, its profile, its scope, etc. seems problematic. Another issue is the inconsistency between educational approaches of parents and teachers, which either realistically support and maintain or, on the contrary, prevent spontaneous play/playing of children. It must be remembered that many discourse and cultural practices require independent, competent, autonomous and self-sufficient children, especially in the present postmodern era of life in which the present children live. The playing and educational rights and the necessity of the need to change the perspective of viewing in favor of focusing on children themselves are highlighted. Explanation of child behavior is conditioned by mental representations (as well as by socially acceptable representations) from the point of view of teachers involved in research, and by their own interpretations by the actor himself (teacher). The act itself of one actor depends on the quality of his/her interaction with the second/other actor. By analyzing the interaction and its implications from the point of view of the actors themselves, we can conceive and interpret the significance of this interaction.
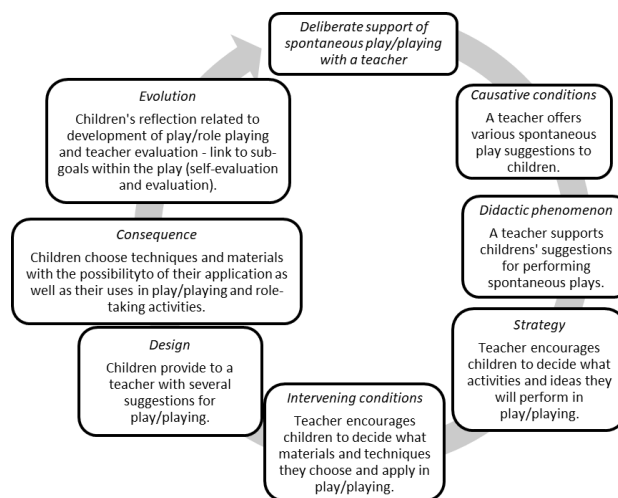
Scheme 2 *Deliberate support of spontaneous play/playing with a teacher.* Kostrub, Severini (2016)

Results

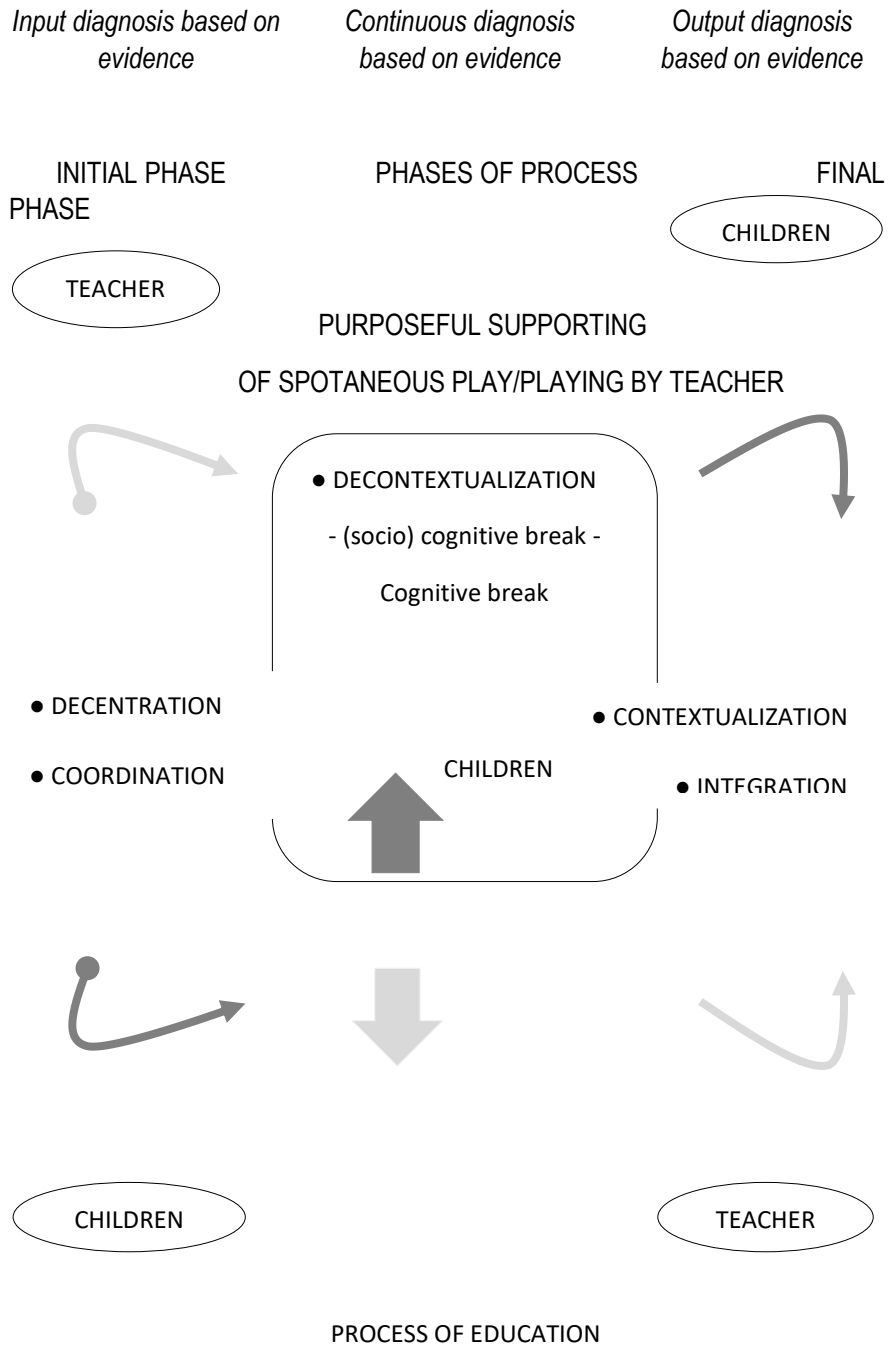The most important research finding is the need for teachers/adults to respect the interests of children for learning, role playing, performing different activities and respecting the efforts to be self-reliant, based on the children's inner needs to learn, explore and discover new/unknown to them. At the same time, to expect that children will be able to use for their advantage what they gained/acquired, and thus they will

face the problems that life brings by the form of a play. The source of the desire to be independent, according to research subjects, is a healthy awareness of self-reliance and self-confidence. Independence is an important asset for children – they do not feel helpless. Research subjects also pointed out that it is important in the process of deliberately support of spontaneous play/playing by a teacher that children are spontaneous and they are involved in creating a process of independence in which they develop their thinking, communication, creativity, physical ability, self-awareness, respect for themselves and others, the ability to adapt, to be able to negotiate and cooperate in joint actions within the activities/plays and to optimally assert themselves in the children's learning/playing group. In addition to these socially necessary features, the teachers involved in the research declared that it is important to develop the appropriate courage to decide independently, according to the interests and needs of the children and others. From the point of view of the teachers involved in the research, the effectiveness of deliberate support for spontaneous play/playing by teacher is reflected in the fact that children are able to behave and act appropriately independently even when they are not told anything or when nobody observes them and does not control them (Note: this is a matter of self-regulation). This does not mean that children "do what they want". On the contrary, it requires cooperation with children as equal partners in learning and development. Together with children, it is important to create rules and consistently insist on their observance and evaluation to ensure that the appropriate climate of acceptance and learning is maintained, as well as order throughout the organized and established daily agenda, which is characterized by efficiency, regularity and accuracy (clear definition). Equally, it is important, as pointed out by the subjects of research, to prevent orders and prohibitions. Children are offered with choices (for which they are reasonably accountable and supported in their take-over) and are presented with appropriate suggestions as well as the use of appropriate forms of creative creation – the development of children's thinking. The sense of didactic support of spontaneous play/playing presents how to make the continuous, planned, controlled, deliberate development of the interdependent personal qualities of children from the discontinuity process of child empowerment. As research subjects said, autonomous children are happier, they do not always and at all times need the help from others. On the contrary, they can help others (they are partners) and become more independent: „When we let the children decide, think and act independently, they become individuals, who will be independent, with their own opinion, capable of communicating properly with others, what is the basis for correct and diplomatic interpersonal relations and mutual co-operation."

Another research finding is that (see Scheme 3) teachers have begun to consciously promote spontaneous play/playing of children in the context of research. In this process, for teachers, the creativity, the imagination, the sense of detail and the complexity of the view, which is possible with the process of education and in education to make, was unconditionally important. It also pointed to the unity in the

process of learning and teaching (their mutual dependance and complementarity). In the process of education freedom, decision-making, influence, responsibility, self-evaluation, and others were accepted and used in the processes of individual and group learning, in which role was preferred, coaching – cooperative and collaborative learning. Priority of deliberate didactic support for spontaneous play/playing by teacher was an autonomous and social constructivist understanding of the teaching process prior to transmisive (academic) teaching. The transmissive model of learning identified in the initial phase of the study is based on the transfer of teacher's knowledge to learners and the use strategies of already done knowledge and skills as well as the acquisition of ready knowledge – children were passive recipients. In the phases of the review process, more precisely between the initial and final stages of the study, decontextualization was identified as a (socio) cognitive break that points to social and cultural inseparability in interpersonal interaction and transaction in the teaching process and it was demonstrated in a phenomenon such as a sociocognitive conflict (important for the realization of a socially and culturally conceptual, conceptual change). In the process of teaching, forms of creative mental activities were used, which were derived from the social and cultural context in the process of their mutual sharing of the social and cultural environment. The model of teaching based on social constructivist theories, which was identified in the final phase of the study, uses the following strategies, which provided a greater scope for children by the teacher: indirect but deliberate influence; prudent support for the learning and development of children on the basis of a educational scaffold; transparency (presentation) of processes and learning outcomes through activities and plays; diversification (segmentation) of the education process; open approach; cooperation and collaboration.

The process of education was based on the acquisition of the knowledge (pre-concepts) of children that influenced their understanding, comprehension and learning. It was realized on the basis of individual thinking as the result of a certain individual specific analysis and mutual discourse as group-shared social representations (social meanings that also include the perspective and experience of the individual – the presence of personal sense). In the process of education, the following interactive and productive methods were used: diagnosis (as a subject of evaluation – integral part of education); discussion (children and teacher discussed about the learning problem); asking open questions (questions asked by both children and teacher); creating answers (by both children and teacher); content analysis (by the teacher); abstract conceptual mapping, loud thinking and explanation (the interaction of subjects in the education process); experimenting with the topic (what activities related to the subject were experimented – experimented with the teaching itself – as the topic was explored by the children and the teachers themselves); self-report, reflection and self-reflection (both by the child and the teacher).

INITIAL PHASE PHASE   PHASES OF PROCESS   FINAL

CHILDREN

TEACHER

PURPOSEFUL SUPPORTING

OF SPOTANEOUS PLAY/PLAYING BY TEACHER

● DECONTEXTUALIZATION

- (socio) cognitive break -

Cognitive break

● DECENTRATION   ● CONTEXTUALIZATION

● COORDINATION   CHILDREN   ● INTEGRATION

CHILDREN   TEACHER

PROCESS OF EDUCATION

Scheme 3 *Changes in positions of teacher and children marked in time and space.*

Kostrub, Severini (2017)

The creative productive atmosphere of a learning/playing group of children was based on a teacher's attitude of respecting children's interests, experiences, values, ideas, attitudes, knowledge/concepts, etc. The process of learning and teaching was organized to suit the sociomoral, emotional, perceptive-motoric and cognitive needs of children. The content of the activities was to raise a wide range of interests in children, to actively gain direct experience, to cooperate and to collaborate. At the time of activities/plays, policy-making and decision-making (with the help and contribution of children) took place in socio-moral discussions and academic interviews: Teachers reduce heteronomy (management, influenced by others influences and rules) when children are given this opportunity. During the time of the end of the activities/plays and the recapitulation, the teachers in the realized research discussed with children about "what they were doing" with the intention of internal motivation of children to discuss, to think, to describe (report), to confront, to compare, to interlink the meanings (apply), to consider and to act independently. As more support for self-regulation (and less external control) is provided to children by the adult (the teacher), the more structured, the more comprehensive and the more systematic their development is. Children become less dependent and more independent, competent, self-sufficient, authentic and more responsible. Children have the learning potential, the teacher has the opportunities and didactically appropriate opportunities for full-time learning. The teacher is a person with a greater and more qualitatively different socio-cultural experience, the children are full of developmental intentions and potentials, which is didactically taken into account in the process of education with a close relationship with the teaching, as well as with the transforming and supporting components – all this is demonstrable in the play at the kindergarten.

Discussion

- The discourse regarding to didactic possibilities of supporting spontaneous play/playing of children has moved qualitatively, but didactic practice lags behind: How to help change in understanding and implementing of deliberate support of spontaneous play/playing by teacher in pre-primary education?
- Play/playing as a reflection of reality/realities and double deviation from reality.
    - Which reality/realities is it?
    - Is it limited by the adult´s world?
    - Is it abstracted from the adult´s world?
- If yes, is... it, or is not a child´s play? Adults, however, are confused and there are elements and factors confirming their personal and social confusion.
- What and who do children represent in their play, playing (if we prefer the theory that the play is socio-culturally conditioned)?

- If a child in his/her play shows a deviation from normal, what to do when the deviation from the normal is now obvious?
- If the child in his/her play shows an escape from reality and the reality, which is generally known (because it is accepted by the members of society) is replaced by another reality; which and whose reality is it and why does he/she do so? – a *legitimate question*.

Conclusions

Reconstruction of the play and its conditions, which took place in the education process.

In order for a teacher to understand what and why the children are playing, it is necessary to observe the play systematically. Implementation should be based on observing the behaviour (behaviour and action) of children in the play. In connection with the observation of children's play, the teacher allows children (taking part in it) to create thematic conceptual maps before and after the play. The conceptual map (as a visualization of mental content as one of the possibilities of its subjective interpretations) as a diagnostic tool for understanding the current level of child's development, for defining the next level of child's development and for predicting didactic possibilities to enable it to reach the potential level of child's development is part of the teacher's didactics. In the diagnostics, external mediators are also used in play/playing of children enabling playing children to see and reflect "steps in the play." At the end of the play feedback takes place, based on the check back of the "steps in the play", such as the conscious internalisation of the way how educational content is acquired and their awareness of the child/children. Appropriate added value are photographs or videos telling about realisation of play/playing of children. All these elements serve to realize the reconstruction of the play and its conditions, which was done in education.

Reconstruction of the play/playing allows the teacher to analyse and induce those didactic and socio-cultural entities that have/had influenced on the character of the play/playing. It is mainly about:

- The character of the impact of the culture (which we live) and its development in the form of play.
- The character of a playing spirit that inspires people living the culture and in the culture.
- Sociocultural (symbolic, semiotic, etc.) systems of society.
- Character – profile of the spontaneous play/playing (didactic question of situational learning).
- External controlled play/playing by adult/s (question of requiring, urging).
- Creation and character of conceptual maps and used external mediators.
- The development and character of the use of play symbols (question of symbolism).

- The development and character of the theme, the play content (the question of imagination, representativeness).
- Development, maintenance and character of interpersonal interaction and transactions (question of role play in the play, plays in the role).

Applying spontaneous play/playing to the development of a child through cultural and discourse practices and applying a spontaneous play/playing to diagnose the development of a child requires an erudite professional. Responsibility in determining the quality of development and the level of development achieved is indispensable. The goal is to co-create the structure and/or adapt already created structure to the new learning situations in the play. Schedule on the basis of done analyzes of options and choices of suitable ideas. Design the idea through preliminary sketches – mental plans. Visualize the most appropriate material – create an inventory of the necessary playing material. Co-create the play rules that will be needed, precise and very clear. Prevent possible difficulties such as space availability, availability of time, number of participants in the play/playing. Imagine the play as if it were a movie. Practice triangulation when verifying (and assuring) whether the goals were achieved. Together with children, elaborate a register of everything that will help the play to improve or simplify the learning process itself, including its application. Evaluate acquired knowledge, competencies, values, attitudes towards the goals set, and verifying didactic efficiency and intentions.

Evidence-based diagnosis corresponds to the systematicity of diagnosis. This type of diagnosis prevents the creation of mistakes. Teacher identifies, assesses and judges the current state of the child's behavior and activity – serves to identify the character of person and cause of something, what is in the hints or in profiles presented in the child's behavior and activity. It focuses on cause and effect relationships. The teacher focuses on at least two areas; to a) the area of what is present in the act and the action of the child, and what is its nature, and b) the area of what is not yet present in the act and the action of the child together with the search and determination of the causes of the said absence. They are primarily concerned on (non) present (internalized) cultural and discursive practices characteristic for our socio-cultural patterns of action and effect that a child has (not). Within pedagogical optimism, it can be said that many development opportunities represent a certain development potential, which means that the teacher's action and work focus on the developmental entities. This is more than a positive starting point in evidence-based diagnostics, as pedagogy is a hypothetical science that uses pedagogical (didactic) hypotheses (including thesis) and therefore it focuses on whether a potential presence of something (often implied in character) can be confirmed or refute. Of course, pedagogy also focuses on the real presence of developmental results when it determines the state, character, profile and prognosis of the results of the development phase and its consequences. It does not neglect either patterns or developmental specificities, and it takes into account the educational objectives and contents (curriculum) related to the

development of the child. The teacher in the education process most frequently by observation learns and records all available information about the subject's behavior and activities and he/she creates an inventory of observed phenomena, and considers the question: *why is that so*? The teacher while the play/playing (learning) of child/children focuses on the protocompetence (in other words: the emerging competence), which is part of a conglomerate of competencies, assesses the conditions, the possibilities of its didactic support, and conceives indications for the further education process. The teacher at the same time by diagnosis finds a discrepancy between what should already been achieved and it is not achieved for different reasons. Diagnosis based on evidence corresponds to the thoroughness of the diagnosis. This type of diagnosis does not overlook the situation context, but it takes it into account. The teacher avoids the diagnosis of the episodic manifestations of the child's/children's behavior, and takes into account the entire context and its impact. The teacher (unlike a parent) has a certain advantage in diagnosing, because he/she observes children in relatively constant (and repetitive) situations. This is due to the fact that the observed child is properly identified and can be diagnosed with respect to his/her developmental level. Indicative estimation is incorporated into systematic diagnostics by teachers. Teacher diagnoses, as far as possible, in representative situations and must distinguish between diagnosed modes of action and their socio-cultural attributes. It is advisable for the teacher to consider the possibility of contradictory expressions depending on the situational context. The situational context evokes situational learning. From this point of view, evidence-based diagnosis has a value for both diagnostician and diagnosed. Pedagogical diagnostics is particularly important in order for the didactic indications to be targeted and effective. In the process of education, there are presentable, significant moments that the teacher seeks with the intention of supporting the development of the child/children. Therefore, it is important to carry out a diagnosis based on evidence that prevents the occurrence of mistakes. Evidence-based diagnosis makes it possible to more accurately indicate the teaching (including the teaching based on play/playing); to focus on what the teacher must think before he or she begins to teach. Their place in this type of diagnosis have casuistries (case studies) and their solutions. Systematic diagnostics – systematic participatory observation is:

- Diagnosis for targeted and effective didactic indications and interventions.
- Verifying the quality and scope of effective support for playing children.
- Identifying links between findings (issues), priorities and measures.
- Play action drama as a form of space for presentation.
- Assisted learning – teammate (teacher as a teammate).
- Strategies for the prudent support of learning processes (so-called scaffolding); zones of the closest development etc.

- Updating (updates his/her knowledge and his/her emerging competencies) and self-presentation of the child in the play/playing in a group of other children and a teacher.

- Displaying, prediction of reality, replacement (substitution) of reality, deviation from reality, escape from reality, repetition of the same play/playing pattern, rigidity in the application of cultural and discursive practices, unpremeditated acts in play/playing, lack of interest in some kinds of play, play inactivity, minimal learning progress in the play, demonstration of taboo action of adults by mechanical imitation, etc.

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WHAT ARE THE MATHEMATICS-RELATED TEACHER TASKS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS?

Kam Ling Lao

Abstract

Young children's early mathematics experience is a strong predictor of their academic achievement in future. Different from the disciplinary-based curriculum in elementary and secondary schools, early mathematics is taught in integrated approach in early childhood education for 3- to 6-year-old young learners. The educational contexts in Asian countries and the Western countries are also different. The processes of mathematics teaching at the preschool levels were largely unexplored. In a project to investigate teacher knowledge with a focus on mathematics education in early childhood education in Hong Kong, twenty mathematics-related teacher tasks in early childhood settings were identified in parallel with the development of a teacher knowledge framework. This paper presents the development process of the list of teacher tasks in Hong Kong – a city with an East-meets-West culture. Three distinct features of teacher practices in early mathematics education were identified - a clear indication of collaboration and parental involvement, an explicit consideration on curriculum integration and an implicit infusion of technology. The task list provides researchers a common ground for further discussion on early mathematics education.

Key words

Early Childhood Education; Mathematics Education; Pedagogical Content Knowledge; Teacher Knowledge

Introduction

Research shows that children's growth in early mathematics is a strong predictor of their future mathematics achievement (Watts, Duncan, Siegler, & Davis-Kean, 2014). A sound early mathematical foundation is vital. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (2010) advocate the provision of high-quality mathematics education for 3- to 6-years-old children. Not only to "integrate mathematics with other activities and other activities with mathematics", teachers are also expected to "actively introduce mathematical concepts, methods, and language through a range of appropriate experiences and teaching strategies" (National Association for the Education of Young Children and National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2010, p. 3). There was a rising call for an intentional teaching of early mathematics and carefully planned early mathematics curriculum on top of the usual practices of embedding early mathematics learning in classroom routines and in play (Ginsburg & Amit, 2008).

The quality of mathematics learning experience in early childhood education (ECE) is crucial for children's growth. The Starting Well Index ranked the quality of government provision of early childhood education across 45 countries by considering the relative availability, affordability and quality of the preschool environments (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012). It was found that high-income countries were not necessarily ranked high. Leading countries commonly had a high bar for preschool educators with specific qualification requirements and a clear parental involvement and outreach. Teachers are the ones who organize and deliver early mathematics curriculum to young children in early childhood institutions. They are the key persons who interact with preschool children and affect the growth of the children's mathematical knowledge (Klibanoff, Levine, Huttenlocher, Vasilyeva, & Hedges, 1987). Hattie (2009) affirmed the impact of teachers' deliberate teaching and intervention on student learning. However, curriculum organization for early childhood education differs greatly from the ways for primary and secondary education. Instead of disciplinary-based curriculum, early childhood institutions usually adopt integrated curriculum with strong emphasis on child-centred approach. Teachers' professional capabilities in creating learning environment and organizing integrated learning experience for children in collaboration with parents were considered as basic (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011; National College for Teaching and Leadership, 2013). Shulman (1987) pointed out that the demands on teachers' knowledge is even higher for student-centred forms of education, such as discovery learning compared with those didactic alternatives. To provide developmentally appropriate mathematics-related experiences to young learners, teachers' professional knowledge, including pedagogical content knowledge and subject knowledge, is indispensable (Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008; Koehler & Mishra, 2009; Shulman, 1987). Teachers should be sensitive enough to the potential

mathematics-related learning opportunities in daily practices in an early childhood setting. However, studies on the processes of mathematics teaching at preschool levels were rare (Ginsburg & Amit, 2008). Ball et al. (2008) summarized elementary teachers' mathematical tasks of teaching. To what extent the mathematics tasks of teaching in elementary schools are similar to the Hong Kong ECE context is unknown. Hence, a better understanding on the practices of early mathematics teaching is essential to illuminate the needs in teacher education.

Research shows that every country has its distinct cultural pattern of mathematics teaching (Stigler, Gonzales, Kawanaka, Knoll, & Serrano, 1999) and lesson signature (Hiebert et al., 2003). Hong Kong students, similar to the other Chinese and Asian students, outperformed their Western counterparts in international comparisons of mathematics achievement in primary and secondary levels. Ma (1999) identified that Chinese elementary mathematics teachers had deeper understanding of fundamental mathematics than the American teachers. Though the research findings were not generated from ECE, it at least indicated that mathematics learning and teaching is context-specific. The Hong Kong ECE context is characterized with its unique Confucian-heritage culture as well as historical and policy developments (Wong & Rao, 2015) but the teacher training for early childhood teachers was limited (Pearson & Rao, 2006). In contrast to the specific academic requirement in Chinese and English explicitly stated in the minimum academic entry qualification for kindergarten teachers (Education Bureau, n.d.), there is no specific academic requirement in Mathematics. Research showed that fourth grade students would have a higher achievement if high parental engagement in early numeracy activities with their children at preschool levels were reported (Mullis, Martin, Foy, & Arora, 2012). Hong Kong was at the fourth from the last in the ranking list. Interestingly, Hong Kong ranked second when parents were asked to report how well their children could do early numeracy tasks when began primary school.

Hong Kong, a city of China with its unique colonial past, is a place where the East and the West meets. An understanding on the practices of early mathematics learning and teaching in Hong Kong not only be beneficial to the development of teacher education in Hong Kong (HK), it also sheds light on comparative studies of early mathematics education.

In a research that aims to investigate the nature of knowledge of early childhood teachers necessary for developing children's early mathematical concepts under the influence of technology (MtEceK), teacher tasks involved in the mathematics-related activities in the Hong Kong ECE context have to be identified to support the development of an instrument to measure MtEceK. The research attempts to address the research gaps among the areas of mathematics education, early childhood education and teacher knowledge through the development of a teacher knowledge framework (namely, the MtEceK Framework). The main purpose of this paper is to present the list of mathematical tasks of teaching in

the Hong Kong early childhood education context and its development, which is part of the MtEceK Study.

Methods

Participants

In order to increase the "prescriptive value" (Graham, 2011) of the MtEceK Framework, the study infused contextual consideration and teacher participation in the development process of the Framework. One focus group (FG) and one expert panel (EP) were formed. Purposive sampling was used. The focus group and the expert group were composed of five and six regular members respectively. Two affiliated members for the focus group and one affiliated member for the expert group were also invited occasionally due to their specific expertise or experience. Group members were experts and practitioners in ECE with diverse backgrounds, working experiences (see Table 1) and expertise (see Table 2). Focus group members, including regular and affiliated members, were frontline practitioners while expert group members were professionals in ECE with experiences in administration or teacher education (see Table 3). The frontline members worked in various types of early childhood institutions. Their working experiences were from private independent kindergartens, non-profit-making kindergartens and special care centres ranging from small-scale school with less than 10 teachers to large-scale school with more than 30 teachers.

Table 1.
Background of group members

Highest level of education			Working Experience in Early childhood education			Experience in teaching 3- to 6-year-old children		
	EP	FG		EP	FG		EP	FG
Master Degree or above	4	0	>21 years	2	1	>21 years	1	1
Bachelor Degree	3	3	11-20 years	4	4	11-20 years	2	3
High Diploma/ Associate Degree	0	4	<10 years	1	2	<10 years	4	3

Table 2.
Expertise of group members

Other working experience in early childhood education*		
	EP	FG
Regional/ interschool curriculum development and implementation	4	1
Teacher training	6	2
Mathematics-related teacher training/research	2	0

*A member may fall in more than one category

Table 3.
Professional roles of group members

Current position in early childhood education*		
	EP	FG
Curriculum development officer in early childhood education	1	0
Teacher educator in tertiary education institution	4	0
School head of early childhood institution	4	0
Senior teacher	0	2
Teacher	0	4
Special child care worker	0	1

*A member may fall in more than one category

Procedure

In the development process of the MtEceK Framework (the Framework) and the teacher task list, collective views and practices were collected through individual interviews and semi-structure group discussions. Focus group method was adopted so that the researchers could be inspired with in-depth insights exposed in the interactions of group members (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Focus group method was particularly suitable for this project due to the exploratory nature of the study. Individual interviews were also conducted to "put behavior in context and provides access to understanding their action" (Seidman, 2006, p. 10). Interviewing allowed the researcher to explore further group members' "lived" experience in HK ECE context. Discussion topics for EP and FG were different. FG focused on the current practices of organizing early mathematics learning experience to young children. Discussions were concentrated on their current work related to early mathematics in ECE. Early mathematical concepts were selected from the "Number" Domain and the "Shape and Space" Domain. Guiding questions were provided in each meeting to frame the discussion (e.g. "What do you need to do to help children recognize the number of objects by counting?", "What do you need to do to help children recognize the basic shapes in the world around them?", "Do you use any electronic games involving mathematical concepts?"). FG members contributed to the discussion with a target to formulate a list of mathematics-related tasks. The data collected from FG that they described their daily work in schools with authentic examples was used to develop the teacher task list.

To stimulate discussion among FG members, Ball's (2008) list of elementary teachers' mathematics tasks of teaching was introduced. Members commented on the applicability of the elementary mathematics teaching tasks on their daily practices in HK ECE context. To establish a common ground for discussion on the influence of technology, a list of twelve commonly used technologies in supporting

instruction and assessment in ECE identified by Hernandez et al.(2015) was also introduced to FG members.

To ensure the mathematics-related tasks were practices-based, FG members were asked to keep anchoring their views with examples from current practices in the discussion. Another characteristics of this study was its iterative formulation process of the task list. Discussion of each FG meeting was consolidated and tabled for comment in next meeting. From the elaboration and iterative refinement in the series of FG discussions, consensus was reached among members and a list of twenty teacher tasks was generated. This bottom-up formulation process itself established a solid foundation for the representativeness of the task list in the authentic practices of the HK ECE context.

EP members participated in the discussions mainly for the development of the MtEceK framework. The list generated by FG was tabled for endorsement from EP members. As experienced ECE professionals in HK, EP members reviewed the list and provided their expert opinions. It helped to ensure the task list reflected their expectation on early math teaching in HK ECE contexts. Blending a feedback loop with EP increased the representativeness of the mathematics-related teacher tasks in the HK ECE context.

All the EP and FG discussions and interviews were transcribed and analyzed using NVivo® Qualitative Data Analysis software. Open coding was first employed by two coders to distinguish each broad concepts and category. Two coders coded segments of selected transcription, followed by a coder meeting to discuss on the interpretation of segments in task categorization and coding. The principal investigator attended the coder meeting to establish intercoder agreement and intercoder reliability (Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, & Pedersen, 2013). The second round of coding was performed based on the revised coding scheme. Cohen's kappa was applied to test the inter-rater reliability. The kappa measures for the focus group and the expert panel were 0.72 and 0.76, both showed substantial agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977).

Results

Twenty mathematics-related teacher tasks were identified and a list of early childhood teacher's mathematical tasks was developed (the Task List) (see Figure 1).

1. To collect, understand and analyze resources that aids the process of children learning mathematics
2. To understand and update the knowledge and information related to early childhood mathematics learning
3. To collect, understand and analyze children's existing mathematical knowledge, learning characteristics, abilities and backgrounds related to specific mathematical concepts
4. To select appropriate mathematical concepts; and to organize, design and compile school-based early childhood mathematics curriculum and instructional design
5. To rationalize the combination of early childhood mathematics content and instructional design with school-based curriculum and themes
6. To select, organize and manage mathematics learning resources for the needs of the school-based early childhood mathematics curriculum
7. To design and produce teaching materials, teaching aids and learning tools for general and specific mathematical concepts
8. To concretely display and express specific mathematical concepts to children
9. To utilize mathematical concepts and related topics, children's existing knowledge and relationship with real life experiences, in order to increase children's learning interest and understanding in specific mathematical concepts
10. To arrange the mathematics learning environment, resources and learning tools in coordination with the teaching of specific mathematical concepts
11. To design learning activities in order to build and consolidate the children's understanding of specific mathematical concepts
12. To observe and analyze the children's learning behavior and performance to determine their understanding of specific mathematical concepts
13. To give feedback in particular to the children's performance in learning specific mathematical concept and make extensions if necessary
14. To monitor and follow up on the children's overall performance in mathematics learning and to adjust the teaching methods or curriculum when necessary
15. To monitor and follow up on the performance of individual children's mathematical learning and to design individual supplementary mathematics activities or to adapt learning tasks when necessary
16. To design assessment activities, develop assessment tools, assess and record children's understanding and recognition of mathematical learning concepts in different methods and depth.
17. To collect, collate and report on information regarding children's mathematics learning
18. To evaluate and follow up on the effectiveness of early childhood mathematics curriculum, and make adjustments and revision on the overall curriculum plan when necessary
19. To communicate and collaborate with peers to enhance early childhood mathematics learning
20. To communicate and discuss with parents and relevant persons in order to understand and facilitate the effectiveness of children's mathematics learning

Figure 1.
List of early childhood teachers' mathematical tasks

In addition, FG members made some remarks for the interpretation of the Task List. In the formulation process of the Task List, "teacher" was considered as a whole team; teachers may have a different division of labor to deal with different teaching tasks in regards to the differences in each school. The list was based on the general teaching tasks of a teacher, so it only showed tasks that specifically affect children's mathematics learning. Since the list was based on the conscious work of teachers in building up children's early mathematics learning experiences, it only covered the tasks teachers purposefully build on children's mathematical knowledge. The tasks in the list refer to the practical work of teachers in the process of building up of early childhood mathematics concepts; the items were not necessarily sequential. "Early Childhood Mathematical Education Curriculum" as a whole refers to the children's overall mathematics learning experience that teachers purposefully deliver at pre-primary institutions, in combination with the overall children's education, rather than mathematics as an individual subject; whereas "teaching" refers to the process of teachers purposefully building up the children's mathematics knowledge at pre-primary institutions. "Teaching resources" in the list refers to the teaching resources, space, IT resources etc. for general and mathematics learning

Discussion

Ginsburg and Amit (2008) claimed that mathematics teaching to young children in ECE and teaching to older students in elementary levels were in essence the same. Challenges and issues encountered by teachers were essentially the same. Some tasks in the Task List were similar in nature with the mathematical tasks of teaching in elementary levels identified by Ball and colleagues (2008). For instance, teachers have to present mathematical ideas to students (Task 8), respond to students' questions and provide feedback (Task 13), modify and adapt teaching materials and resources (Task 7 and 11). Since the purposes of mathematics education and the subject matter knowledge differ, the tasks showed that mathematics teaching in elementary levels and early childhood educations were with different emphases. For instance, the task "using mathematical notation and language and critiquing its use" and "choosing and developing useable definition" identified by Ball and colleagues (Ball et al., 2008, p. 400) were not in the Task List while the utilization of mathematical concepts was related to children's learning interest instead (Task 9).

The Task List showed that early childhood teachers were actually taking part in the process of early mathematics curriculum development. The Task List covered processes of curriculum planning (such as, Task 3 and 4), curriculum implementation (Task 9, 10, 11), curriculum evaluation (Task 18) and curriculum improvement (Task 2, 5). Moreover, the Task List echoed with the essential roles of teachers and key professionals for the provision of high-quality mathematics education for 3- to 6-years-old children. For instance, teachers were expected to "ensure the curriculum in coherent and compatible

with known relationships and sequences of important mathematical ideas" and "support children's learning by thoughtfully and continually assessing all children's mathematical knowledge, skills, and strategies" (National Association for the Education of Young Children and National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2010, p. 3). Task 5, 18 and Task 12, 14, 15, 16 addressed the two roles respectively.

The Task List reflected three unique characteristics of the early mathematics education in the HK ECE context. Firstly, there was a clear indication of collaboration and parental involvement in HK ECE teachers' daily practices. Task 20 was specifically focused on the communication with parents. It is understandable because the microsystem and the mesosystem are closely related to the growth of young children (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Parents play an important role in early childhood education. Focus group members reflected that communication with parents was their routine work. The communication was carried out continually throughout the whole term. Communication was in various forms but the main purpose was to facilitate the effectiveness of children's mathematics learning.

> "At the end of each academic term, parents will receive a summative assessment report on their children's learning. The parents can understand the performance of their kids. Since there is limited school time, parents can provide learning support at home and strengthen their kids' mathematics learning based on the report."

> "We have learning activities every week. I will select some photos to put into the portfolio. For instance, a child learnt to thread four beads. It will let parents know the kid's learning progress. It is also an instrument of communication with parents."

> "Parents do not understand the development of early number concepts. They always worried that their kids lag behind the others. So, I usually take the initiative and ask them how they teach their children counting. Most parents will ask their kids to read the numerals aloud through book reading. I will suggest them to do it through play."

Communication and collaboration with peers and other parties are also important tasks for ECE teachers (Task 19 and 20). Besides collaboration with peers, teachers also contact other parties, such as publishers and professionals from external support agents in order to enhance early mathematics teaching.

"Our curriculum is developed by the Curriculum Development Group. We have group leaders. .. We will examine the children's performance in assessment activities. We will find out the reasons and discuss."

"We have collaborative lesson planning. For each teaching theme, all teachers teaching the same level will sit together to prepare the teaching. The teacher-in-charge will present the teaching plans and consult our opinions. If we still have comment, the plan can be revised again. The final plan is the product of our collaborative work."

The second characteristics is the explicit consideration on curriculum coherence and integration in the early mathematics education (such as Task 4, 5, 18). Teachers strived to keep the horizontal and vertical coherence of children's mathematics learning experience with great flexibility in developing the school-based curriculum.

"We arrange [the learning activities] in a spiral way to avoid fragmentation of teaching. According to the children's development, we coordinate the teaching of languages, mathematics and other domains and then develop the integrative curriculum."

"We adopt a theme-based approach in teaching. All mathematics activities are tied with the theme to a certain extent. Recently, we organize some mathematics activities in relation to the Lunar New Year. … The children are asked to count the blossoms and red packets."

"We will examine the curriculum based on the information collected. Children were able to master certain concept last academic year. In this year, children [of the same level] cannot master that concept. … Then, you have to adjust the next teaching theme. We should not stick to the original curriculum. If I teach a certain theme and more than twenty of them fail to count to five, I will not teach count to six in the next teaching theme."

"We taught counting from one to ten [in K1]. When we taught them counting to 8 and 9, we discovered that some children did not master counting from one to five at all. Hence, we adjusted the K1 curriculum in next year."

The third characteristics is the implicit infusion of technology in the early mathematics education. Though technology was not explicitly stated in the tasks, it was mentioned in many tasks in the deliberation process. For instance, technologies were used in task 8 (display and express specific mathematics to children).

> "Most schools were equipped with digital whiteboards or projectors for teaching purposes. The teaching materials can be projected and enlarged [with the use of computer] to produce a clearer image to students. Taking "classification" as an example, I can select and enlarge a particular part of a picture so that students can identify the special features of an image. This is a better way [to highlight the specific feature] than using a pen to circle it."

Teachers also utilize technology in task 7 (design and produce teaching materials, teaching aids and learning tools for general and special mathematical concepts).

> "I use computer to design different versions of teaching materials for students with different abilities. For the junior class, I created some pictures with more distinguishable features so that students can easily identify the differences among them. For [teaching classification to] the junior class, I will [use computer] to create [figures wearing] spectacles of star-shaped frame so that children can easily identify the feature. For the senior class, [frames of] those spectacles will be more ordinary and less dramatic. After the children mastered classification, I will [use computer] to generate new pictures with all other features [in the figures] for students to do the classification."

In HK ECE context, technology was also considered as a means to optimize students learning and to create new opportunities for mathematics learning. A FG member mentioned that e-Learning platform enabled parental involvement in students learning and hence learning can be extended from school to home with the involvement of the parents.

> "Parents have their own account to access the e-Learning platform. The platform provides a lot of learning resources. Mathematics games are updated monthly. We encourage parents to use the platform in accompany with their children. The platform provider updates those games and make sure the content is aligned with the mathematics learning in school."

Conclusions

In this study, twenty mathematical tasks of teaching in Hong Kong early childhood education were identified. The task list showed three unique features of the early childhood mathematics education in the Hong Kong context. Hong Kong teachers involve a lot of communication and collaboration with parents and peers in their daily practices. They are conscious of the importance of curriculum integration and curriculum coherence. Technology is already infused in their practices.

The task list not only supported the development of the instrument to measure teacher knowledge, it can be used in combination with the knowledge framework to serve as a reflection tool of teachers in future. It also provides researchers a picture of the current practices of early mathematics education for further discussion and investigation in early childhood education.

Acknowledgements

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STIMULATION OF ARTISTIC CREATIVITY IN CHILDREN OF PRE-SCHOOL AND EARLY SCHOOL AGE THROUGH STORYTELLING

Nina Licul

Abstract

The motivation of children of pre-school and early school age for artistic creation is based on their active emotional relationship with their environment. Since they use digital technologies from their earliest age, today's children lose the emotional relation to visual information; they perceive visual information superficially, as some accurate facts. Storytelling, as the method of awakening our emotional states, is reflected in the humanistic approach to the child, where the stimulation of emotional and mental experiences affects the development of imagination, the visualization of real and unreal events and the implementation of the experience into the art-making process. Apart from a number of positive effects on verbotonal, intellectual and emotional development of the child, this method benefits the development of creative factors and it may even have a therapeutic value. The interdisciplinary and holistic character of storytelling method activates cognitive, psychomotor and affective development of the child. This paper analyzes the artistic and creative processes of children who participated in museum workshops as part of a storytelling project. A holistic approach to storytelling improves children's receptive abilities, enhances their experiential and moral sense and develops their capacity to express themselves by using different techniques of art.

Key words: artistic expression; creativity development; emotional development; stimulation of creativity; storytelling

Introduction

Creative development of children of pre-school and early school age is linked withemotional, social and intellectual (cognitive) development. Artistic expression can reveal children's developmental phases and their emotional, social and mental processes. Considering the fact that society and technology have changed significantly over the years, as compared to the times of our ancestors, these processes are now manifested in completely different forms (Shapiro, 1998). A lack of emotions, caused by the pressures of today's pace of life, along with a surplus of information and the coldness of technology, or, on the other hand, the overemphasis of negative emotions caused by people's failure to meet the demands of such world, negatively affect creativity, which, in turn, negatively affects the sense of satisfaction and success. Therefore, it is important from the child's earliest age to cultivate his/her emotional, social and intellectual health, by encouraging creativity and stimulating the child's emotional and mental experience (Bacinger Klobučarić, Glavina, 2012). Storytelling, as a method of stimulating such experience, has a vital role in the development of children of pre-school and early school age.

It is widely known that storytelling affects children's verbotonal development. Listening to a spoken word expands the child's vocabulary and improves his/her linguistic expression (Visinko, 2005). Word, as a means of relaying messages and stimulating reactions, is a powerful template with which teachers or activity leaders can influence the growth of children's creative abilities. Further, it helps liberate children's potentials and encourages the entire development of a child's personality.

The interest for children's stories is at its highest in pre-school and early school age, and it gradually decreases after the child turns twelve. In a questionnaire about children's activities after reading a story, the greatest percentage of the children responded that they found pleasure in drawing and painting (39%) as compared to a smaller percentage of those who enjoyed in writing and drama and role-play activities (Visinko, 2005). The results of this questionnaire may be accounted for by children's innate needs for aesthetical and creative interpretation of contents (as the highest-level human need). Aesthetical and creative interpretation occurs in natural, inborn ways of expressing ourselves through art, which is important for children's motor, cognitive and emotional development. Children's interest and their reception of stories depend on the way the storyteller tells, reads or interprets the story. The storyteller's ability to verbally interpret the story and convey the emotional states affect the ways in which children experience the story. The psychological moments in which the storyteller keeps the children fully focused and silent before the beginning of the story, as well as in the moments during the storytelling itself, are equally important for the continuation of the activities. Children's focus is affected by speech intonation, speech rate, pauses, voice pitch, facial expression and body gesture (Visinko, 2005). When children are immersed in the story with the use of these verbal methods, they begin to visualize the story's content, feel the atmosphere of the story; children begin to identify themselves with the characters, and visualize

what they have heard, filling in details about what they have not heard. Finally, children add emotional color to their vision of the story, and depending on their sensibility and the level of aesthetic excitement, they develop, to different extents, the ability to creatively transform the experience by using artistic language.

In addition to the above said, storytelling is important for cognitive and metacognitive development. While listening to different contents, children directly accept them and imprint them into their experience. Children develop the ability to recognize, understand and manage their emotions (Bacinger Klobučarić, Glavina, 2012) and social skills, which is important for survival, satisfaction and the success of individuals in society. By learning the morals of a story, children develop empathy, altruism, tolerance and sense of responsibility (Shapiro, 1998). According to J. Dewey's theory, creative thinking is based on experience and knowledge, in a way that the experience and knowledge are manipulated in a new, different way (Duraković, 1985). Duraković's research on creative abilities in problem-solving, creativity-oriented classes that focused on the interpretation of literary texts showed that experience and knowledge stimulated by creative learning affect the children's success and progress to a greater extent, as compared to creative abilities of children exposed to traditional ways of learning.

Creative thinking is even more stimulated by translating children's visualizations into artistic expressions, by materializing their thinking structures and releasing their mental processes. Storytelling as the method of encouraging creativity can be enriched by exposing children to different experiences such as multi-media and sensory stimulations or by enabling them to acquire an authentic experience in observing original artworks exposed in a museum (Brajčić, Kovačević, Kuščević, 2013).

The role of museums in today's education is bigger than ever. Today the museum is not just a place for exhibiting artifacts, but a place of learning (Billmann, 2004; according to Škarić, 2008, p. 39). This new vision of museums allows for interdisciplinary processes to take place and offer the possibilities of a more efficient and more profound acquisition of knowledge and experience, with an emphasis on emotional and sensory processes. Storytelling, learning and creating in museum spaces are beneficial for the development of school children's concentration on learning contents, and for the improvement of their understanding of time and context in which certain artwork is created. Furthermore, it improves the children's communication with artworks in authentic surroundings. All this requires a detailed preparation of the activity leader, knowledge about children's mental, physical and developmental needs, as well other competences needed for the stimulation of children's creativity and for the conducting of storytelling-based artistic activities. Storytelling aimed at stimulating artistic creativity requires the storyteller to be familiar with artistic techniques and to be aware of the effects that a spoken word can have on the formation of a child's reality.

Principles of Artistic Expression Through Storytelling

Art education of children of pre-school and early school age relies on a meaningful connection of their mental and emotional processes and their social and cultural environment. There is an increasing need for creativity, imaginativeness and cultivation of children's cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2006). Therefore, the method of telling stories from local heritage, which is carried out in authentic environments, artistically interpreted and aimed at stimulating children's creativity, meets the demands of today's education and upbringing. The most important didactic principles that underlie art-based activities are: quality and educational orientation, free artistic expression, systematicity and gradualness. This also includes an appreciation for living environment, awareness and action, age-appropriate tasks, individuality, vividness and abstraction, exemplarity and the integration of theory and practice (Herceg, Rončević, Karlavaris, 2010). Verbal and artistic activities that involve storytelling in museum spaces, conversation and story analysis, acquisition of artistic language and techniques and creative interpretation of stories rest on specific and specially expressed principles. These are: vividness in teaching, i.e., *active relationship to learning,* appreciation for the living environment, i.e., *active relationship to the living environment* (cultural/local heritage, social relationships, self-awareness and awareness of the immediate surroundings) and *free artistic expression*, i.e., appreciation for the child's imagination, and *active emotional life of the child.* These specific principles make verbal-artistic activities suitable and recommendable for working with children of pre-school and early school age.

Active Relationship to Learning

Storytelling in museum spaces, with the use authentic objects, makes favorable grounds for learning about life and environment. Storytelling in general is a means for awakening the child's interest and curiosity for the exploration of museum items and their backgrounds. Museum exhibits convey a multitude of information and offer many sources for the acquisition of knowledge and experience (Milutinović, 2010). If museum contents are not presented to children in a way that respects their nature and development processes, the children will find these contents boring. This happens often in practice, due to poor guidance and insufficient number museum educators. The awakening of the child's interest for museum contents is the process in which we establish connections between historical, social, cultural and other contexts of the museum items, and this can be done by telling a motivational story that includes an emotional twist, wondrous course of events, unrealistic characters or descriptions of historically relevant persons and their achievements. By combining reality with fiction, children learn the story much easier and their knowledge becomes more permanent. In the authentic atmosphere, children become immersed in the story very easily; they become emotionally and mentally active. Moreover, children fill in the details of the story, visualize the context and become active participants of the story. Didactic principle of

vividness is a specific quality of such approach, where learning takes place in close contact with original works of art and therefore becomes more profound (Brajčić et al., 2013). Experiences offered by such contact with the original artwork and authentic spaces are based on different sensory stimulations, which is impossible to arrange in a classroom.

Active relationship to learning is also reflected in children's artworks, where elements of a story are expressed in verbal and visual language. By creating a visual interpretation of the story, children actively render what they hear. In this process, they adopt the elements of composition and art techniques and develop their own artistic expression. The facts and emotional impressions that children get after hearing a story are transformed from mental images into works of art. A visually-oriented child, who learns more easily by gathering visual information, will grasp a story through the story's images and the content of the story will be committed to the child's memory. Therefore, this method is suitable for a number of styles of learning, for instance, auditory, verbal and visual. In addition, by introducing different games, multi-sensory or multimedia elements to the motivational part, it is possible to adapt this method for kinesthetic, interpersonal and other learning styles.

Active Relationship to the Living Environment / Local Heritage

The method of storytelling in museums corresponds to the educational objectives of making children sensitive to the contents of cultural heritage and its sustainability (Brajčić, Kuščević, 2008). By encouraging the interest in local heritage from children's earliest age, we introduce the contents of their own environment into their life. In doing so, we raise children's awareness of their own existence in spatial and temporal dimension, making them realize the possibilities of influencing their own environment. By telling stories that revive the elements of local heritage and introduce interesting plots, we stimulate children's emotional relationship to these elements. As a result, children become active creators of local heritage and instigators of changes in their environment. In expressing themselves through art, children learn and develop critical thinking about local heritage. They also develop individual attitudes towards their environment, which they express by creating new visual environments (Brajčić, Kuščević, 2008).

Raising awareness about local heritage is important for preserving the cultural identity of individuals in the processes of globalization, where demographic image of the world is constantly changing and cultural diversity is gradually lost. Museums, as the sources of information about autochthonous heritage, can raise awareness of our own culture and other people's cultures. By actively involving children in the exploration of their environment, starting from their earliest age, we maintain the relationship with the original self in time and space. In addition, we broaden the children's experience by including them in the processes of exploring what is close to them, i.e., by including them in the "processes that involve

observing, asking questions, examining and comparing" (Sheppard, 1993, according to Brajčić, Kuščević, 2008, p. 173).

In terms of the child's development, pre-school age, according to Tanay (1990), is the period when children "intensively penetrate the symbolic systems of their own culture" (p. 57). Children gradually learn about their own culture, opening their minds to the values of other people's cultures. This is confirmed by the need for creating a suitable foundation for developing children's experience and allowing them to grow up into sane individuals, into social beings who are aware of themselves and their environment. In an active relationship to the living environment, children establish relations among different areas and connect different experiences into a whole. In addition, an active interaction with works of art offers the children a better opportunity to meet their local heritage and learn about historical aspects of artwork, artists' biographies and other. Finally, they can express their experiences through verbal and visual channels, and they express themselves on a figurative level.

A Free Artistic Expression

Playing has an important role in children's mental, physical, cognitive and emotional development, and thereby occupies an important space in education processes. Child-play inspires imagination, while the basic content of play is drawn from reality itself (Elkonin, 1981). The storytelling that includes artistic and creative interpretations, or the tasks of creating the story ending, which is later drawn or painted, can also be seen as a form of child-play – a child-play where children learn, express their thoughts and emotions, unburdened by external expectations. The possibility of thinking up different creative solutions allows children to think freely, without being afraid of giving an incorrect answer. Playing is also important for increasing the children's motivation: while playing, children are intrinsically motivated. While playing, children want to form a relationship with other children or with the play itself (Elkonin, 1981). Placing children in the role of the creators of the story or stimulating them to learn independently while playing, is particularly suitable in the period of children's transition from kindergarten to primary school, since this is the period when they have to assume responsibilities and adapt their roles to a new environment.

In a free artistic expression children use their imagination, enhance their intrinsic motivation, express their emotions, develop critical thinking, assert their independence and increase their sense of responsibility. In the tasks of creating story endings, children very often offer an idea first, but then they think about it critically, and finally offer a completely different ending.

Active Emotional Life of the Child

Observation of original works of art is an experience that sparks emotional and affective reactions in children and activates their cognitive processes. Museum activities that awaken children's imagination

provide a healthy basis for development of sensitivity and aesthetic experience (Kuščević, 2016). Empathy plays a significant role in children's emotional development. It affects the development of relationships with other children and encourages prosocial behavior (Saarni, 1999). By involving children in an emotional plot of a story, we activate their emotions and direct their attention. By telling stories, watching the original works of art and giving artistic interpretation, children identify themselves with the characters and express their opinions and feelings by using different creative solutions (Mayer, Salovey, 1999).

During the reading, the reader shows the ability to express his/her emotions using mimics, gestures, intonation, voice speed and voice pitch. Children of pre-school and early school age posses a strong ability of recognizing emotions, which is a guiding thread in their journey through imagination. The concentration on the story content is connected to the child's emotional state, and these influences are mutual. Children of pre-school and early school age feel the need to verbalize their emotional states and resolve their issues in verbal communication (Greenberg, Snell, 1999.). This explains why children so often verbalize their drawings and paintings, where they elaborate on each other's ideas and create a synthesis of each other's thoughts and feelings.

Approaches to Children's Upbringing in the Context of Using the Storytelling Method to Inspire Artistic Creativity

Children's artistic and verbal development are mutually related and they develop extremely fast. By using storytelling method to inspire artistic creativity, we support the coherence of these two areas and simultaneously activate both developmental aspects. This method can thus be seen as a multidisciplinary method that produces numerous beneficial effects on the child's whole development: development of motor skills, development of language/verbal expression, emotional development, development of abilities, cognition and social relationships (Herceg, Rončević, Karlavaris, 2010), and, finally, on creativity development. The notion of whole development corresponds to the holistic approach in children's education and upbringing. Storytelling method creates a holistic context for the development of all the above stated areas, which leads to a more permanent storing of information and creates relations among different areas. Considering the above said, such approach to this method is considered integrative.

When children assume roles of explorers in a creative process, in which the activity leader mediates between motivation and cognition, they develop autonomy, freedom and interests, and that also includes the development of creativity (Miljak, 1996). Such a humanistic approach to children's education is also based on the whole development of children's personality and it is one of the characteristics of modern pedagogic tendencies.

Children's creative processes are the reflections of their inner beings. It is known that storytelling method has beneficial effects in psychotherapy as it helps children get rid of negative emotions and express what is otherwise difficult to verbalize. These methods are therefore often used to make a hospital stay less stressful or boring for children. These therapeutic stories are known as the "healing stories". In addition, storytelling and artistic activities help children focus – they direct children's attention, increase their concentration and relax the entire body (Balić-Šimrak, 2010). Children of pre-school and early school age succeed in maintaining their concentration on these activities longer than they do in their usual activities, which confirms the beneficial effect of using this method. In addition, emotional and vivid contents and artistic assignments proved to be helpful in the work with more active and talkative children; such assignments keep them involved and concentrated, making it easier for the activity leader to continue with the tasks. This is why, when speaking about storytelling, we say that this method is also therapeutic.

Storytelling and Artistic Processes in Children Involved in Museum Workshops

Artistic and creative processes described below were occurring over the period of six months, during children's art workshops that were held in the spaces of Rijeka's Maritime and History Museum of the Croatian Littoral. The group consisted of eight children of pre-school and early school age. All the children attended the workshops voluntarily. The workshops were held twice a week, with the duration of 90 minutes. There was no time limit for the realization of the works. The stories were from Rijeka's cultural heritage and they were related either to the exhibitions hosted in the Museum at the time of the workshops or to the original works of art from the museum's permanent collection. Finally, the stories were based on historical facts, fantastic journeys or they contained both the elements of history and the elements of fiction. They were grouped into several categories:

a) stories from local heritage
b) stories related to ongoing exhibitions
c) stories with historical and fictional elements
d) unfinished stories
e) stories that children discover or create through play

The content of the stories from local heritage had some kind of connection to the items from the Museum's holdings. The children first listened to a story that was based on an original story related to a work of art, and then they received the opportunity to verify the story by observing the original work of art in the Museum's spaces. We noticed the following: the greater the children's knowledge about the observed item, the stronger was their motivation for the reception of visual information. After being motivated by the

story and the analysis of the observed item, children would give an artistic interpretation of the story. Throughout the artistic process, children recalled and repeated parts of the story and by doing so they committed the information to their memory.

In stories related to ongoing exhibitions and the museum's permanent exhibits, the activity leader would choose a story segment that seemed interesting and appropriate for the children's age. That segment primarily had to stimulate artistic activity and, as in the case of other types of stories, it had to reflect the artistic content that we wanted the children to adopt. Focusing on visual and compositional elements, children depicted a part of the story. Their motivation for the depiction (and adoption of art terms) would be greater and more intensive than it would be if they were given motifs that were not as interesting and attractive.

Stories that combine historical facts and fictional elements are particularly important for the development of children's creativity. Unexpected plots, vividly described scenes, characters and events affect children's emotional states and their level of artistic expression. After hearing these stories, children often asked whether the story was true. The storyteller would then explain which elements of the story were true and which were not, so that the children would be able to separate fiction from reality and process what they heard. The children who generally showed greater creativity added to their works some elements of the story that were not told by the storyteller. They created those elements in their imagination because they were able to visualize the story more easily. Sometimes this process was facilitated by the museum exhibits, where children noticed something that was not uttered during the storytelling. This way, by applying different verbal, visual, auditory and tactile methods, the storyteller created a full experience for the children, and the children could therefore express themselves in their art more easily.

Unfinished stories are also very beneficial for the development of children's creativity and they offer an endless range of possible conclusions. In the process of creating the plot or forming the story ending, children of pre-school and early school age feel the need to verbalize their ideas, even during the artistic process itself. A conversation with "self" during the process of creating an artwork represents a transition from external to internal speech. Such monologue, which is typical for children of up to seven years of age, called "egocentric speech", was described by Piaget. Vigotski (1977) considers it the key element of cognitive development. Upon completion of their works, children would describe what they depicted, while the works were elaborated more or less, depending on each child's ability in divergent production (Karlavaris et al., 1988). In unfinished stories, children activate their critical thinking and become active creators of the story.

Stories can also be created and discovered by playing different games, which is always stimulating for children. The game of searching for parts of a story in authentic spaces, doing the puzzles that gradually reveal the storyline or playing quiz games stimulate children's socialization processes and goal-fulfillment.

With these stories, children independently learned and discovered the plot step by step. In this process, they learned a new content, which they later interpreted in their own work of art.

Children's artistic production in all of the above mentioned examples was motivated by different impulses: word, conversation, original works of art, music, games (Karlavaris et al., 1988). The children expressed themselves using different media and they adopted different art terms. The children's expression was enriched with an increased interest in depiction of the story content. Creating art from these stories stimulated the development of all creative factors: flexibility and fluency of thought, artistic elaboration, sensitivity to problems, originality and redefinition. Table 1 shows the creative factors that were especially stimulated by the above stated types of stories.

Table 1. *Artistic and creative factors that are especially encouraged by specific types of stories*

Type of story	Artistic and creative factor
stories from local heritage	Redefinition
stories related to ongoing exhibitions and museum exhibits	sensitivity to problems
stories with historical and fictional elements	sensitivity to problems, flexibility
unfinished stories	artistic elaboration, originality, fluency
stories discovered or created through play	originality, fluency

All of the described types of stories inspire children's imagination, so it is no wonder that the children did not have any need to copy each others' works. In these settings, children become reflective beings, they connect their inner self with their environment and project it all into a full, materialized picture in their artworks.

Examples of Artistic and Creative Processes in Children Involved in Museum Workshops In the continuation of this paper, we present three examples of artistic processes and the achievements of children of pre-school and early school age, which offer an insight into the development of creativity by using the storytelling method.

In the first example, children heard an unfinished story about a usual day in the museum. The children saw the works of art exhibited in the museum and learned some terms from art history and museology. During a tour around the museum, they discovered the spatial and temporal dimension of the story, after which they had to create a plot – they had to make up a story about what happened after the museum

workers went home. The story was told silently, after calming down the talkative and lively children, with a slight dramatization of the content and a controlled use of pitch and speed of voice. After that, children used different art techniques to depict their stories. The selection of the art technique and materials was spontaneous and it corresponded to the children's wishes.
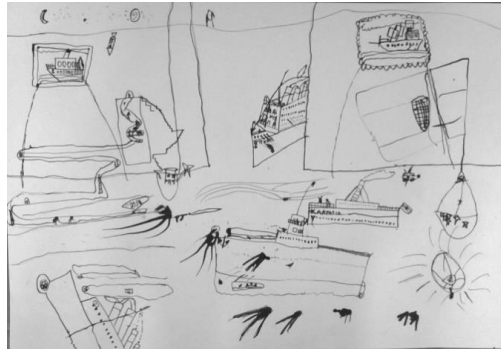
Picture 1. The first example of stimulating artistic creativity using the method of an unfinished story

In the first example, a boy (9.3 years) wanted to explain his idea verbally at first. His excitement over the creation of a completely new reality was quite visible. Throughout the entire process, the child constantly elaborated on his idea by introducing more and more details to his story and he was fully dedicated to his work. Children who usually cannot maintain their concentration for more than 30-60 minutes, concentrate on their activities in art workshops for as much as 90 minutes, which is a clear evidence of the beneficial effect of this method. This particular boy usually has a shorter attention span owing to his need for physical movement, but in this activity he was focused during the entire 90 minutes of the workshop. He depicted the space realistically, as he perceived it in the museum, and showed a good perception of space. He gradually introduced elements from his imagination and transformed this space into a vivid area full of historical and fictional details. The whole time he verbalized his ideas about the amusing events that happened there. The child chose the technique to work with (ink) on his own. In the analysis of his work, he explained the content in minute details, using the learned terms, and in the process of drawing he demonstrated a high level of creative factors of artistic elaboration, originality and fluency.

In the second example, children listened to a story in the museum, in a room dedicated to Rijeka's renowned physician and violin maker Franjo Kresnik. In this authentic space, children could hear the sounds of violin while listening to the story that contained historical facts and fictional elements. The content of the story included descriptions of Kresnik's appearance, his office and his passion for music – music that cured people from life's troubles and emotional weaknesses. In this short tale, the range of emotions was quite wide, and the ending contained a moral message. The introduction to this activity was based on a multisensory experience with the aim of awakening the children's creative potentials.

Picture 2. The second example of stimulating artistic creativity using the method of telling stories with historical and fictional elements

By evoking a detailed description of Franjo Kresnik, a girl (8 years) chose to paint a portrait with the violin in the foreground. A vivid description and emotionally colored content had a deep impression on the child in her reflection on the subject of this story. This is why she chose the story's main protagonist as the only motif in her work. The factor of sensitivity to problems was highly expressed in her painting, while she ignored the elements that seemed irrelevant. The girl skillfully placed the motif on the paper and mastered the coloristic elements that emphasized the impression of dignity and dedication of Franjo Kresnik. The development of emotional competence, which includes empathy and the ability to recognize other people's emotions, affects the ability of controlling one's own emotions in different contexts (Saarni, 1999). The development of emotional competence is supported in this case by the development of creative, psychomotor and cognitive competences.

In the third example, children discovered the story on their own. They searched for the story puzzles hidden around the museum space, and each piece had a part on the story written in the back. After finding each piece, children had to assemble the puzzles in order to form a meaningful and coherent story. The front of the puzzles showed historical figures whose original portraits were hanged in the museum. When the game was finished, children were so motivated that they wanted to see and analyze these portraits. After that, children were doing their artworks based on the historical story from local heritage.

Picture 3. The third example of stimulating artistic creativity using the method of telling stories from local heritage that children learn through play

Apart from improving social competences in team work, the children completely adopted a very demanding story from local heritage, in an adjusted and flexible way. The exceptionally strong motivation for learning the content was the result of an interesting game and an active engagement in the formation of the story. The children had to verbalize each part of the story in order to formulate the plot and by doing so, they directly acquired new knowledge. While doing their artworks afterwards, they developed their creative factors of redefinition and translated their knowledge into a new visual logic. This creative visual and verbal method of learning in the museum improves children's receptive system, sharpens their perception, generates new experiences and develops their curiosity (Brajčić et al., 2013, according to Voris, Sedzielarz and Blacknom, 1986).

After six months of observing the artistic and creative processes in these children, we noticed the following: the children had a stronger motivation for gaining knowledge and skills, they showed a greater curiosity and a stronger desire for mastering art techniques and procedures; they were able to concentrate better and longer, they immersed themselves in the spoken word, introduced their own details into the story and demonstrated a greater level of all creative factors. Finally, they felt the need to verbalize emotions and ideas, their attention was more easily manipulated and they did not have any need for copying other children during the artistic activities.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that every child has creative potentials. Children are whole beings, thus we have to encourage their whole development. A continuous stimulation of children's potentials, where every child has the freedom and the right to create, will have positive effects on their way of thinking, emancipation

and emotional regulation. Children are active, reflective and creative beings. Stimulation of artistic creativity through storytelling in children of pre-school and early school age is a complex activity that benefits the whole development. If it is enriched with stories from local heritage, original works of art, multisensory experiences or games, it will have an intrinsic importance since it corresponds to children's needs. This method connects verbotonal, emotional, creative, cognitive, metacognitive, psychomotor and affective development of the child, and supports a healthy growth of the child's personality.

The activity leader has a significant role in a successful use of this method. Depending on his or her ability to relay the story and the sensibility for the stimulation of sensory world and artistic creation, the activity leader can instill in the child the codes for satisfaction, happiness, moral values and self-actualization. These processes follow all principles of expression that are suitable for children's age: active relationship to learning, environment and local heritage, freedom of expression and active emotional life. Works of art reflect children's inner beings and the ways they experience their environment. The greater the storyteller's ability to relay the message, the stronger is the children's motivation for expressing themselves (verbally or in art).

In the context of the present times, it is important to develop the flexibility of thought (and creativity in general) from the earliest age. Flexibility of thought helps us cope with different life situations and those moments when we leave our comfort zones. I believe that today, when we raise different individuals in same environments, this method can bring out the best in everyone. It gives children the opportunity to satisfy their need for "spiritual pleasure", as the most important and the most neglected need in our education system (Chabot, Chabot, 2009).

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UNDERSTANDING, KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURE OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS – THE CORNERSTONE OF QUALITY COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

Ana Malnar and Ana Momčilović

Abstract

Educational practices and institutional culture reflect the knowledge and understanding we all possess. Our understanding of this is the key to everything, since pure theoretical knowledge is not enough to change the current situation. Changes of the entire practice have also changed our relationship with parents. In order for parents to feel accepted and welcome in the educational institution, and therefore to feel respected regarding their competencies, an institution for early and pre-school education should be open to them, always ready to interact and establish cooperation.

Experience has shown that cooperation between parents and the institution is a complex process in which motivation and interest of both sides represents a key component. An attempt was made to identify and meet the different needs of parents through varied forms of cooperation. Through three phases and with the help of different methods (various parent-teacher meetings, individual consultation, OneDrive with individual folders, teacher training, a website which contains descriptions and various activities, assemblies of activities, project presentations and the like), parents were introduced to their children's life in the institution, their way of learning and exploring the very educational process. In the final phase, preparations for school were carried out by both parents and teachers, through various explorative, etc. tasks with a maximum engagement by all members of the family and kindergarten.

The transition from the classic cooperation toward partnerships with parents is a long and gradual journey. Joint planning, documentation and reflection have helped to recognize and realize the needs of parents in the institutional context, as well as to change attitudes and beliefs belonging to the teachers. In this way, parents become equal participants of the education and co-creators of our kindergarten curriculum. By changing our own practices and culture, we have raised the level of cooperation and opened a path to partnership.

Keywords: cooperation, partnership, parents, new methods

Introduction

In institution, we all posses certain amount of knowledge and understanding and that is reflecting on our educational practice an institutional culture.(Vujčić, 2011.) Crucial is our understanding of this practice.(Miljak, 2009.) An institution for early and preschool education should be opet to parents, always ready to interact and establish cooperation. Changes of the entire practice also changed relationship with parents. Whether the kindergarten will be a stimulating environment for the child, will largely depend on the relationship between parents, teachers and the child. One of the quality standards of the institution is the possibility and the way of participation of parents in the work and organization of the preschool institution in order for parents to feel accepted and welcome in the educational institution, and therefore to feel respected regarding their competencies.(Brajša-Žganec, Slaviček, 2014.)

Methods

Key component of cooperation between parents and the institution are motivation and interest. An attempt was made to identify and meet the different needs of parents through varied forms of cooperation. Parents were introduced to their children's life in the institution, their way of learning and exploring the very educational process through three phases. A qualitative aproach was used. In the first phase Onedrive method was used. Onedrive contained individual folders of children with their pictures in random daily activities and situations, pictures that show children's achievements or the adoption of some new skill or technique. The purpose was to document the growth and development of the child on daily basis through months. Although parents could get insight into some activities in kindergarten, our next phase and purpose was to have parents introduced to the educational processes even deeper, although they are not physically there. Through the website, parents get a better insight into working with children through explanations of activities, developmental and educational outcomes and through multimedia documentation – photos and videos of children in relevant activities. Numerous activities take daily place in kindergarten. This is a safe way to inform parents about all relevant and upcoming events in kindergarten through the calendar of events, where information on parental meetings, excursions or workshops can be found. „Support" is a practical way to as for advice or to arrange an individual conversation with an expert, associate or teacher. There is also an updated menu for the current week. Parents are able to contribute to the functioning of the institution and receive from the institution – reciprocity. In this way we have opened the possibility for parents as active participants to give suggestions for planning work programs with children, activities, projects, trips and visits important for the full developent of the child. The third phase involved preschool children. Preparations for school were carried out by both parents and teachers, through various explorative tasks with a maximum engagement

by all the members of family and kindergarten. Tasks such as „Me and my family", „Family coat of arms", „Riddle about Zagreb coast of arms", "Dragon quest", „Museum quest - illusion", „Storytelling", „Fairytale and different ending", "Library visit" etc. Final project were presentations made by children and parents together. Presentation of the final work was optional. Parents and children had a freedom to decide about the theme their children shows interest in and whether they want to show a powerpoint presentation or a poster. We gathered in the living room with both children and parents, so that each child had the opportunity to present thir work in the form of presentation or poster with the help of parents. The next day we gave the children again the opportunity to present their work independently in front of the other, younger children in the group.

Results and Discussion

Passing through three different phases in collaboration with parents, we see that as much as we show motivation and interest in co-operation with parents, they will respond to the same. Identifying and meeting the different needs of parents through varied forms of cooperation it has been shown how perents see teachers and how they would like to be treated by them.

The most important thing for parents is that they want someone who will take care of them and their children, they want to be respectedas a parent and as a equal partner and teacher in child's education. It is very important for them to see their ideas respected and used in educational process and reflecting on all dimenssions of educational process. A good and quality relationship and co-operation between parents and teachers results above all with a satisfied child who is more than happy to participate in joint activities and learn in a different and interesting way.(Ward, 2013.)

This is best demonstrated in the third phase of co-operation. It could be said that third phase was a partnership because we supported together with parents children's learning and helped them to „learn how to learn". For their work and effort they received recognition from children from the group they showed their work. That was also an excellent way to work on their self-confidence.

Conclusion

Joint planning, documentation and reflection have helped to recognize and realize the needs of parents in the institutional context, as well as to change atitudes and beliefs belonging to the teachers.(Slunjski, 2008.) Parents become equal participants of the education and co-creators of our kindergarten curriculum. By changing our own practices and culture, we have raised the level of cooperation and opened a path to partnership. The transition from the classic cooperation toward partnership with parents is a long and

gradual journey. Partnership with parents is a process of constant reflection, examination, discussion and evaluation within the institution community and parents.

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ASSESSMENT IN THE EARLY YEARS: THE PERSPECTIVES AND PRACTICES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

Anna May Navarette

Abstract

In recent years there has been growing attention on the importance of assessment in early childhood education. This paper is a section taken from a Master's dissertation aiming to investigate early childhood educators' perspectives and practices regarding assessment in the early years. Particularly, it focuses on the approaches and strategies early childhood educators utilised in doing assessment, and the sources of support and challenges they associate with it. Adopting a qualitative design, in-depth interviews were conducted with eight educators from different settings in Ireland, and thematic analysis was used to identify emergent themes. Findings highlight the view of assessment as a process and a product, as well as the practice of ongoing, continuous assessment. Furthermore, data suggests that collaboration plays a role in assessment practice, particularly collaborating with colleagues and parents. Through the lens of the Child's Rights Perspective, responses also reveal that there are mixed views towards children's active participation and collaboration in the assessment process. The study also suggests that time, child-adult ratios, staff resources, and qualifications and training of educators contribute to the ease in which assessment is carried out.

Introduction

Adults play a critical role in providing environments that support children's learning and development (Hattie, 2009; Whitebread, 2008). Educators, therefore, have an immense responsibility in guiding children to reach their maximum capacities. Assessment is instrumental in facilitating the process of learning and development in early childhood education (ECE) settings (Dunphy, 2008), obtaining information that not only represents a child's skills and potentials, but also the adequacy of the settings that they operate in.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child stresses the necessity of a relevant curriculum to the child's life and needs, and one which promotes the development of holistic skills (Hodgkin & Newell, 2007). Assessment plays a key role in constructing meaningful curriculum (National Research Council, 2001) that promotes quality service for children's learning and development. Allowing early childhood educators to share their perspectives and practices on assessment can offer an inside look at what actually happens inside classrooms and the thoughts and attitudes that direct them. Additionally, it can shed light on the issues and challenges faced by educators surrounding young children's assessment.

For the purpose of this study, assessment is seen as the process of looking at, examining, and documenting children's perceptions and capacities, while seeking to understand how children think and learn, and tracking their progress to further facilitate their learning (Dunphy, 2008). Collaboration and partnership are also integral for supporting children's learning and development. This allows educators to have a more holistic picture of the child as well as their capabilities and development (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2009).

The study was done in Ireland, where there is a diverse provision of ECE services ranging from centre-based services such as crèches or nurseries, sessional services, and after school programmes, to more informal childcare arrangements such as childminding (Corbett, 2012). In recent years key documents have been created to act as guides for the content and quality of the services provided. *Síolta: The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood,* introduced in 2006, focuses on supporting services in achieving and maintaining quality in settings catering to children from birth to six years (Duignan, 2012). *Aistear,* on the other hand, is a curriculum framework for children from birth to six years published in 2009, discussing themes relating to child development and providing strategies to promote it (NCCA, 2009). Together, *Síolta* and *Aistear* are complementary resources aiming to raise the quality of ECE services in Ireland.

This particular paper focuses on the Child's Rights Perspective, a movement that advocates the adult's role as one that enables children to shape their own childhoods (Woodhead, 2006) as well as facilitate

inclusion, foster resilience, and empower children to enact change (Smith, 2007). Children are seen as active beings, ones with voice and agency:

By voice we refer to that cluster of intentions, hopes, grievances, and expectations that children guard as their own. This voice surfaces only when the adult has learned to ask and get out of the way. By agency we refer to the fact that children are much more self-determining actors than we actually think. They measure issues against their own interests and values, they make up their own minds, they take action as a function of their own wills – that is, if the more powerful class, the adults, allow them to do so. (Pufall & Unsworth, 2004, pp. 8-9)

In the context of ECE, this translates to listening and inviting children to participate in democratic dialogue and decision-making (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2007), as well as giving them the opportunity to become self-assessors of their own learning (Fleer & Richardson, 2004).

There are also challenges encountered by educators in carrying out assessment in practice. For instance, some factors may hinder the effective implementation of assessment, such as relevant professional training (National Research Council, 2001). In addition, the demand for time and effort spent on the different aspects of children's assessment were cited as potential roadblocks for its regular use in kindergarten classrooms (Buldu, 2010; Nah, 2014).

This study aimed to investigate early childhood educators' perspectives regarding assessment in the early years, pertaining to children from birth to five years. Particularly, the paper focuses on the approaches and strategies early childhood educators utilised in doing assessment within their settings, and the sources of support and challenges they associate with it.

Methods

A qualitative approach was used in the study, informed by an Interpretivist paradigm. Through purposive sampling, eight early childhood educators working with children from birth to five years were gathered as participants for the research. In-depth interviews were utilised as the main method for data gathering. The in-depth interviews sought to explore educators' understanding and perspectives on assessment, while giving space for them to provide self-reports of their own assessment practices.

Results and Discussion

Responses from the interviews suggest that educators perceive assessment as both a process and a product, highlighting that achieving outcomes was an important aspect of assessment, but also strongly emphasising the value of children's participation and collaboration. Assessment was interpreted as an act of seeing and looking at children, particularly taking into consideration children's capabilities, needs, and interests, and using observation as the main tool for gathering this information. Respondents also pointed

out that beyond just seeing, assessment builds on this, using this knowledge as a basis for their planning and decision-making, and adapting practice to the information they have gathered. The cycle of observing, interpreting, and planning influences pedagogical framing and in turn shapes curriculum (Department of Education and Skills, n.d.; Wood & Attfield, 2005). Moreover, responses indicate that assessment is a vehicle to document and compile information about children (Dunphy, 2008).

Collaboration, with colleagues, parents, and to an extent with children, was also reported to be important and valuable in the process of assessment. Working within a team facilitates dialogue and discussion among colleagues and supports reviewing children and assessment information together, and this exchange of ideas make planning manageable to carry out (Dodge, Heroman, Charles, & Maiorca, 2004). Educators, through parents and families, also have access to a wealth of information about children in their homes to better understand them and build a more complete picture of each child (Birbili & Tzioga, 2014). Through collaboration, parents and educators mutually gain from each other information to aid in supporting children's learning and development. Findings indicate that educators maintain positive relationships with parents, and endeavour to communicate and partner with them to support children's learning and development (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, n.d.).

On collaborating with children, the educators expressed different views concerning the extent and nature of children's participation in the assessment process. For some, assessment is a process that children are unaware of, and so their contribution is demonstrated through their unconscious provision of information, citing concerns about putting undue pressure on them. On the other hand, some spoke of actively involving children in the research process, emphasising their competence and innate ability to assess themselves. These findings suggest that though the principles of the 'new social studies of childhood' (Pugh, 2014) pushes for a paradigm shift in viewing children and childhoods, it has yet to gain traction with most educators who took part in this study.

Overwhelmingly, lack of time was considered a major obstacle in conducting assessment by educators (Buldu, 2010). Respondents indicate a concern surrounding the appropriation of too much time on assessment that engagement with children is reduced. Also seen to facilitate more efficient assessment is smaller group sizes and adult-child ratios (Shim, Hestenes, & Cassidy, 2004), which allow educators to have more focus and time on each child, thereby making tasks and responsibilities more manageable. Some educators described how lack of staff resources limits their practice of assessment because the time to process assessment information and fill out tools is dependent on cover staff who would take over being with the children while they do their work. More significantly, the knowledge and educational background relating to early childhood education is seen to greatly contribute to the ease of which assessment is understood and conducted (Basford & Bath, 2014; Buldu, 2010). Respondents shared that having the understanding and know-how has equipped them to confidently practice assessment as part

of their role in facilitating children's learning and development. Educators give prime importance to training and education, considering it invaluable in providing knowledge and equipping them with skills to fulfil their role with ease.

Conclusion

The study found that early childhood educators see assessment as a vehicle to facilitate children's learning and development. Findings also indicate that collaboration adds to the assessment process, particularly through meaningful interactions with parents and colleagues. Moreover, there is a seeming constraint in the agentic participation of children in the assessment process, with educators having ambivalent views towards issues such as children's self-assessment. The study also found that time is a major obstacle educators have in doing assessment in their daily practice, and that educators put a prime value on sufficient training and gaining adequate educational qualification to be able to conduct effective assessment in the early years.

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATTACHMENT, SELF-REGULATION OF MOTIVATION AND ACADEMIC EFFICIENCY

Marjan Ninčević and Dunja Jurić Vukelić

Abstract

During the early social-emotional development, through the relationship with their parents and families, children develop attachment style which they will tend to when establishing emotional bonds later in life. Studies show that attachment style determines the child's emotional characteristics and level of self-regulation, which is, in the context of learning and working, closely associated with high achievement motivation and intrinsic motivation – curiosity for new content, challenges, and pleasure in learning. Parents determine the development of intrinsic motivation by encouraging curiosity, independence, perseverance and the pursuit of new knowledge. Recent research study various indicators of the child's cognitive skills, including academic success, and are focused on the earliest period of development in which critical environmental influences enable subsequent development of quality thinking. The aim of the present study was to examine attachment styles, the degree of self-regulation of motivation and academic efficiency among students. The study included 118 students of the University of Zagreb. The results indicate that the most common attachment style is preoccupied style, characterized by a negative model of self and positive model for others, and the high level of academic efficiency.

Keywords: attachment, self-regulation of motivation, academic efficiency

Introduction

Regulation of emotion and effective expression of emotions management are the basic prerequisites of social adaptation, behavior-oriented behavior and social expectations, achievement of goals and effective social coordination (Čudina-Obradović and Obradović, 2006). Those mechanisms are considered part of a broader category of processes called emotional intelligence, consisting of emotional self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy and social skills (Salovey, Brackett and Mayer, 2004, according to Čudina-Obradović and Obradović, 2006).

Among these components, appropriate behavior is mostly determined by emotional self-regulation, which is difficult to define, even to the opinion that there are so many determinants of self-regulation as well as research carried out on the subject (Zeidner, Boekaerts and Pintrich, 2000), especially if a broad context of behavior to study is considered. In the context of emotion, self-regulation involves a heterogeneous set of physiological, behavioral and cognitive processes used to modulate the experience and express positive and negative emotions. Emotional experience stimulates the process of emotional regulation, which determines the type, intensity and duration of emotional experience (Gross and John, 2003).

Simply put, emotional regulation can be identified with the management of feelings or self-regulation, coordination of emotional expression with the demands of the environment, control and orientation of negative emotions in order to prevent interference of functioning and relationships (Čudina-Obradović & Obradović, 2006). Self-regulation or degree of control of thoughts, behaviors, feelings and motivation in the process of achieving goals by using personal strategies is a common psychology of education research term (Panadero and Alonso-Tapia, 2014). Self-regulated learning is a proactive process of transforming mental abilities into academic skills; students metacognitively, motivatively and behaviorally determine the process of their own learning (Zimmerman, 1990; 2001; Zimmerman and Schunk, 2002). Students who apply self-regulated learning strategies follow, regulate and control their cognition, motivation, and behavior and are guided by their own goals and characteristics of a particular task, and such activities affect the individual, his or her level of achievement and the content of what is taught (Wolters, Pintrich & Karabenick , 2005).

Children learn to recognize basic emotions, express them in interaction with the environment, first and foremost with their parents, and start to learn to control them soon after birth (LaFreniere, 2000, according to Brajša-Žganec & Slunjski, 2006). Parent's relationship with the child results in the emergence of attachment, a strong emotional relationship between the child and the parent, which gives the child a sense of trust and confidence, and it emerge during the first year of child's life with the purpose of maintaining closeness to the object of attachment, especially in stressful conditions (Ainsworth and Bowlby, 1991; Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991). Depending on the type and quality of relationship, the

child will develop a certain style of attachment – a relatively stable style that determines the emotional relationships in the future. In other words, the style of attachment of the child and the parent determines the quality of relationships in adolescence and adulthood (Bowlby, 1969). Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) supported Bowlby's theory with a series of empirical dana, describing individual differences in styles of attachment that contribute to the understanding of various close, family or love relationships in adulthood, and that model was used in the present research.

Attachment styles are determined by model of self and by model of others, or of a degree in which an individual thinks himself to be valuable and the degree of trust to others. Based on these two models, authors describe four types of attachment in adulthood. The prevailing positive emotions towards oneself and others will result in safe attachment, characterized by a sense of acceptance. Positive emotions towards oneself but not to others will result in the avoidance of close relationship with the purpose of self-protection, and such a style is called dismissing attachment. Combining the feelings of anxiety and fear of evaluation result in preoccupied attachment. Negative emotions towards oneself and to others are a fearful form of attachment.

Research has shown that the relationship between parents and a child determines emotional traits or preferences later in life, so, for example, safe children are more inclined to experience a wide range of diverse emotions (Čudina-Obradović and Obradović, 2006). Studies have also demonstrated significant role of parents in the development of self-regulation in behaviour, learning, motivation and self-efficacy in school children (Raboteg-Šarić, Sakoman, and Brajša-Žganec, 2002; Vedder-Weiss and Fortus, 2013; and Usher, 2015; Kim, 2015; Häfner, Flunger, Dicke, Gaspard, Brisson, Nagengast and Trautwein, 2017). Encouraging families stimulate self-esteem and belief in competence in children, the importance of increasing efforts after failure, and the feeling of autonomy and acceptance of learning goals as their own (Čudina-Obradović and Obradović, 2006). The relationship is, of course, two-way, so that learning-related positive emotions help in setting goals and defining of challenges, finding new and creative solutions to problems, maintaining motivation and increasing effort (Pekrun, Goetz, Titz and Perry, 2002). Similar to the attachment styles, the influence of emotion on self-regulation of motivation to learn and to process information more deeply is described by two dimensions: activation and valence, which then determine the category of emotions. We thus distinguish positive activating, such as enjoyment in learning; positive deactivating, such as relief; negative activating, for example, anger; and negative deactivating, such as boredom. All these emotions reduce the available cognitive resources because of attention focus on the object of emotion, besides the positive activating emotion of pleasure of learning, which increases the performance level by focusing attention on the task (Burić, 2008).

Method

The aim of this study was to examine the dominant styles of attachment in the adult age, the degree of academic self-efficacy, the degree of self-regulating motivation, and the relationship between the three mentioned variables among the students of the University of Zagreb.

Hypotheses

1. Most of the participants belong to groups of safe affection, and the least number of participants belong to the dismissing attachment.
2. Secure attachment group will achieve higher results in self-regulating motivation and academic efficiency than participants of other attachment styles.
3. Dismissing attachment group will achieve lower results in self-regulating motivation and academic achievement than participants of other attachment styles.

Participants

The study involved 119 students of University of Zagreb: Croatian Studies, Education and Rehabilitation, Agronomy, Philosophy, Law, Faculty of Science and Mathematics, Faculty of Philosophy and Religious Sciences and Faculty of Transport and Traffic Sciences. Eighty-four percent of the participants was female, sixteen percent were male, an average age of twenty-four years old. Participants were undergraduate and graduate students. The sample was occasional and reflects the good will of the participants to fill in the online questionnaire.

Instruments and procedure

1) The Relationship Questionnaire

The Relationship Questionnaire is intended for self-assessment of the style of attachment in adulthood (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991). The style of attachment is determined by combination of two models – a model of self and a model of others, based on which one of the four basic styles develops. The questionnaire consists of four paragraphs that describe types of attachment, and the participant selects only one fragment that he/she feels mostly related to. Secure attachment was described by the statement: It is easy for me to become emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't worry about being alone or having others not accept me.

A preoccupied style, characterized by a negative model of self and positive about others, was related to a statement: I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others, but I often find that others are

reluctant to get as close as I would like. I am uncomfortable being without close relationships, but I sometimes worry that others don't value me as much as I value them.

Dismissing attachment, with positive model of self and negative about others, was: I am comfortable without close emotional relationships. It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient, and I prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on me.

Fearful attachment style was characterised by negative model of both self and others. A claim to this style: I am uncomfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely, or to depend on them. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.

Participants select only the description they consider to be the most accurate for them. Collected responses provide categorical information.

The questionnaire has good constructive, convergent and discriminatory validity (Scharfe and Bartholomew, 1994).

Figure 1. Dimensions and styles of attachment (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991)

Model of self

		Positive	Negative
	Positive	**Secure attachment** Intimacy, autonomy	**Preoccupied attachment** Preoccupied with relationships
Model of other	Negative	**Dismissing attachment** Dismissing of intimacy	**Fearful attachment** Fearful of intimacy

Self-regulating motivation scale

Self-regulating motivation scale (Wolters, 1999) examines the preference for self-regulated learning strategies. Scale consists of 28 items. Factor analysis determines fivefactorial hierarchical structure with the general factor of self-regulating motivation (Jurić, 2006). Factors with individual scales are shown in *Table 1*. Validation of the questionnaire (Jurić, 2004) showed high content validity as well as constructive

and predictive reliability. High reliability was also confirmed in this research, in which Cronbach's α coefficient was 0.92.

Table 1. Factors and Items of Self-Regulatory Motivation Scale

Mastery Self-Talk	I am saying to myself that I must continue to learn just to learn as much as possible.
	I'm trying to make myself to work a lot in order to really learn something.
	I am challengingmyself to finish my work and to learn the subject as much as possible.
Performance Self-Talk	I remind myself how important it is to have good grades.
	I'm telling myself I have to go on learning to be good at school.
	I try to make myself work more with thinking about getting good grades.
Self-Consequating	I promise myself that I will do what I want to do if I finish my job first.
	I promise to myself a reward if I finish my job.
	I agree with myself to do some fun after a certain amount of work I've done.
Interest Enhancement	I make learning more pleasant by turning it into fun.
	I'm trying to associate subjetct with something I like to do or something that amuses me.
	I'm trying to figure out the way subject is related to my life.
Environmental Control	I assure that nothing distracts me.
	I'm trying to get rid of the things that hinder me while learning.
	I'm trying to learn at a time when I'm focused the most.

Academic Self-efficacy Scale

Academic Self-efficacy is a component of motivational beliefs that refers to the expectations of success (Lončarić, 2014). The scale has eight items and consists of two sub-scales that measure self-efficacy in the learning process and self-efficacy in achieving the desired learning outcomes. Two latent variables obtained by factor analysis are significantly correlated, so the scale can be applied as a one-factor measure. It can be applied individually or in a group. Participants on a 5-degree scale estimate the extent to which these claims apply to them, 1 = *does not apply to me* to 5 = *it entirely applies to me.* Some of the items are: *I'm successful in almost all areas of study; It's easy for me to learn for the final exams; I am solving the school tasks regularly*. The result is the average value of the sum of estimates on the subskala

items, or, if interpreted as an estimate of total self-efficacy, the average value of the sum of estimates on all the items. The reliability of the scale is good, the values obtained in this study correspond to the scores obtained by original validation study (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.87).

The survey was conducted during September and October 2016 using online questionnaire that was sent to available student contacts and linked in social network groups. The empirical results obtained by self-assessment were used. The results were processed and presented with descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS Statistics 21.0.

Results and discussion

Table 1 shows the participants' distribution according to the style of attachment they opted for. Approximately the same number of participants chose a description of safe, fearful and preoccupied attachment, while fewer participants opted for a dismissing attachment style. The results are in line with expectations based on previous research, in which secure attachment dominated, and dismissing attachment style was at least represented (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991; Scharfe and Bartholomew, 1995). Past studies have been focused on the correlation of individual attachment styles with the concept of self, social anxiety, personality traits, psychopathology (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991; Korver-Nieberg, Berry, Meijer & Haan, 2014; Manning, Dickson, Palmier-Claus, Cunliffe and Taylor, 2017), while there was far less studies in the education domain, and they mostly confirm positive correlation of secure attachment with academic or work success (Wright, Perrone-McGovern, Boo and White, 2014).

Table 1. Distribution of participants according to attachment style

Attachment style	N	%
Safe	34	29.1%
Fearful	34	29.1%
Preoccupied	32	27.4%
Dismissling	17	14.5%
Total	117	100%

Table 2. Results on a self-efficacy and self-regulating motivation measures

	N	Min	Max	M	Sd
Academic self-efficacy	117	1.63	5.00	3.54	0.75
Self-regulating motivation	117	1.29	4.96	3.35	0.69
Mastery Self-Talk	117	1.00	5.00	3.28	0.86

Performance Self-Talk	117	1.00	5.00	3.34	0.99
Self-Consequating	117	1.00	5.00	3.44	1.02
Interest Enhancement	117	1.00	5.00	3.15	0.98
Environmental Control	117	1.00	5.00	3.39	0.94

Table 2 shows descriptive data on Academic Self-efficacy Scale, Self-regulatory Motivation Questionnaire and its sub-scales. In order to verify the validity of the factor matrix computation, we checked the Bartlett test for correlation matrix significance and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin sampling adequacy test. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test was 0.85, which is a very good value for factorization, and Bartlett's test showed the significance of the correlation matrix at a risk of less than 1%. Factorization confirmed the existence of five factors of self-regulating motivation, with the expected high correlations between sub-scales. The average result of the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale is higher than expected given the values obtained by standardizing the questionnaire. In some sub-scales, the result is highest in the area of self-awareness, which is expected with regard to the sub-scale that is largely appropriate for adolescents, and at the same time a highly effective behavioral motivational strategy (Schwinger, Steinmayr and Spinath, 2009).

Table 3. Comparison of results on Self-regulating Motivation and Academic Self-efficacy measures considering attachment style

Attachment		Academic Self-efficacy	Self-regulated motivation
Safe	M	3.65	3.41
	N	34	30
	Sd	0.71	0.62
Fearful	M	3.18	3.19
	N	34	29
	Sd	0.75	0.76
Preoccupied	M	3.65	3.39
	N	32	29
	Sd	0.79	0.69
Dismissing	M	3,63	3.48
	N	17	16
	Sd	0.71	0.72

Although the expected statistically significant differences in the degree of self-estimated academic efficiency, self-regulating motivation, and its individual components considering attachment style were not confirmed, it is interesting that, with the fearful attachment in both examined variables, the results were

lower compared to the other categories. Such results are in line with the expectations and results of previous studies, which proved various negative outcomes such as symptoms of psychopathology, nonfunctional relationships, in connection with insecure, and particularly fearful, attachment style (Kinniburgh, Blaustein, Spinazzola, & Van der Kolk, 2017). In general, interest for relationships with parents, early experiences and educational achievements correlation goes to the beginngings of developmental psychology, and the issues are still actual (Baumrind, 1966, Booth and Dunn 2013, Moed et al., 2017). One of the studies has shown that parents of the most successful students treated their children with unconditional respect and appreciation, but also expected a reasonable relationship to obligations and fulfillment of the potentials. Their relationship can be described with terms of acceptance, understanding and warmth (Weininger, 1983). Children with subjective experience of feeling rejected and neglected achieve poorer school success compared to children used to warmth and encouragement (Schmeck, 2013).

It is necessary to point out the limitation of the present study, a small and relatively homogenous convinience sample. In addition, it is questionable whether the questionnaires or some items were applicable to higher education level, considering their specificity and the fact that they were custom made for the study, primarily intendet for lower levels of education. That implies the need for the construction of new measuring instruments that would enable more accurate initial hypotheses testing.

Conclusion

Presented results indicated a connection between the fearful attachment style and lower results in the self-regulating motivation and academic efficiency. The results were expected in view of previous established correlation of negative emotionality, low emotional regulation, and fearful attachment style. Study has highlighted the significance of emotions in the educational process: studying and self-evaluation are important determinants of different achievements, and therefore influence on emotional experiences, which can then affect cognitive processes, performance, motivation and self-assessment of personal achievement. Results pointed out the importance of developing emotional regulation in adulthood, considering importance of emotional regulation not only in achieving academic goals, but also in many other aspects of life.

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UNDERSTANDING PRESCHOOL CHILDREN'S SKILL IN SUBSTRACTION USING COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Nurul Aliah Mustafa, Sharifah Salwah Syed Omar, Norazzila Shafie & Mohd Fauzi Kamarudin

Abstract

This study is aimed at evaluating the level of pre-school children's skills in the strand of Science and Technology for the Early Math subject. The subject focused is on the subtraction of numbers within 1 to 10. The study was conducted on students who are currently enrolled in one of the preschool programmes under the Ministry of Education, in Kampung Che Lijah, Dungun, Terengganu, Malaysia. The class comprised of 25 students, 9 males (5 years = 3, 6 years = 6) and 16 female (5 years = 4, 6 = 12). However, for the purpose of this study, it only involved 10 children who were divided into 2 groups with each group comprising of mixed age and gender. Framed by a case study research design, the main focus of this research was the process of teaching and learning using cooperative learning method. The data were collected through review of written exercises that have been prepared by the children, as well as interviews with teachers and children. The data collected were analyzed to determine the percentage increase in the performance of pupils in this topic. Tables and graphs were constructed to show an overview of the increase in the level of achievement of the children. The study also highlighted some implications and recommendations for practice toward the betterment of implementation of preschool children skills in relation to cooperative learning and subtraction operation in mathematics activities.

Keywords: Cooperative learning; Pre-school children; Subtraction.

Introduction

The importance of early childhood education in Malaysia is regarded as part of the national agenda towards uplifting children's education and their future. This is related to the Government action, in particular the Ministry of Education of Malaysia's recognition of this level of education and thereupon placed the preschool education in the National Education System under the provisions of the Education Act 1996. The formulation of National Preschool Curriculum (NPC) in the year 2003 has made it compulsory for all preschool programs, either in public and private agencies to implement it accordingly. In 2010, the NPC was replaced by National Preschool Standard Curriculum (NPSC) 2010 which emphasized physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual and social aspects (JERI) (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2009).

NPSC is a modular based curriculum that focuses on basic module and theme module as well as 6 strands. One of the strands is of Science and Technology which includes the subject of Early Science and activities in objects building such as blocks, including the use of the Early Math Information and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The Early Math subject provides initial experience that embodies the concept of pre-numbers, numbers, number operations, value of money, concept of time, form and space.

In line with the Malaysia's National Preschool Curriculum design which aimed to produce students with mathematics thoughtful learning, it is imperative to instill and practice thoughtful learning as early as possible since early childhood. This is to enable students not only to be literate in mathematics, but also capable of thinking and communicating mathematically in their everyday life. The thoughtful learning embedded in mathematic curriculum design encompasses four main ideas i.e. learning areas, attitude and values, skills and process (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2016). The four main ideas are described and shown extensively in figure 1.
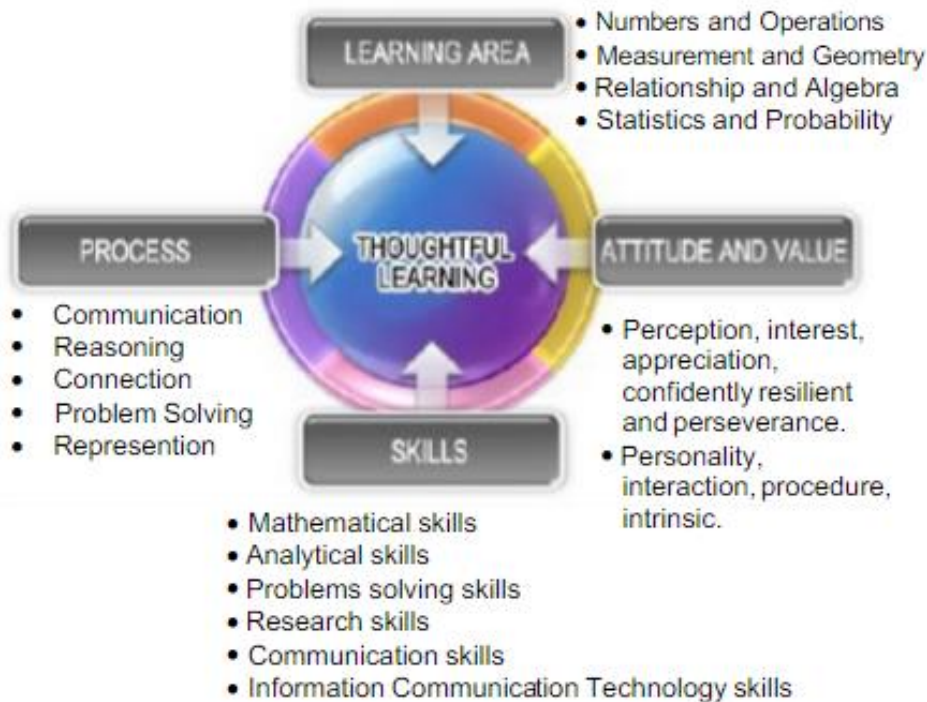
Figure 1: Malaysia's Mathematics Curriculum Framework

Numerical skills are essential for everyone to master in order to enable control of his/her daily life more effectively (Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 2011). Many studies also showed that mastery of number concepts at preschool stage played an important role in the development of mathematics or numerical skills at an early age. Distinctively preschool is the starting point for children to do well and later master advanced mathematics (Sarama, Lange, Clements, & Wolfe, 2012). However, there are issues with teachers in implementing the cooperative method in teaching early mathematics because teachers themselves lack knowledge and skills which consequently make them uninterested in using it in their classrooms. Nonetheless, the study focused on evaluating the children's skills in the strand of Science and Technology for the Early Math subject using cooperative method, under the circumstances. The focused subject was subtraction of numbers from 1 to 10.

Research objectives

The main aim of this study is to understand preschool children's skill in subtraction using cooperative learning. The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the effectiveness of cooperative techniques in subtraction operation in mathematic subject.
2. To examine the levels of children's skill in subtraction operation in mathematic subject.

Literature

This section presents the literature background of the paper. It presents the theoretical concept of cooperative learning which is the underlying theory of the research and previous studies related to the main themes of the paper.

Cooperative learning

Students learning does not only derives from the sensory information that exists independently in the environment absorbed by the minds of the students through sensational experiences. Nor is it the existence of natural knowledge in the mentality. Knowledge is also acquired by the self-construction of knowledge of each student through experience, reflection and abstraction (Slavin, 1990). Students have their own idea of almost everything, where something is right and something is wrong. If these understandings and misconceptions are neglected or not properly addressed, their original understanding or belief will remain intact even though in their exams they may respond as teachers would expect them to do (Artut, 2009).

This cooperative learning method allows students to build their own knowledge as stated in Piaget's theory which emphasizes constructivism learning (building self-knowledge). This theory too coincides with Vygotsky's theory that insists humans build knowledge through social interactions. Additionally, humans have a space between self-achievement and performance achievement that can only be achieved through someone's help. The space known as 'ZPD' (Proximal Development Zone) and assistance is also known as Scaffolding (Morrison, 2011).

Cooperative learning method is a teaching and learning strategy which emphasized constructivist learning. The crucial implementation instruction of this method is to carry activities out in small groups where each group members help each other, share ideas, and solve problems together. All members in the group are responsible for their learning and that of their teammates. At its core the idea is that objectives and success can be achieved if all team members work together towards common goal. A group usually consist of four to six members who remain with the group in a given period (Sharan,1980; Slavin, 1990). Johnson & Johnson (1999) stated that cooperative learning is an instructional method which is exercised in small group of children to work among themselves and to get the best or maximize their potentials in learning. Many preschool programmes or centre have been using and emphasizing cooperation in classroom to develop mathematical, reading and problem solving skills among their children (NCTM, 2001). In learning mathematics, cooperative learning is appropriate and should be implemented not only in the children's early stages but also primary and secondary education.

The Cooperative Learning Method was selected for this study since it satisfies many features of learning, most importantly in learning mathematics. The significance of cooperative method in learning cannot be

disputed as evident in many studies concerning teaching and learning that has been applied to various subjects from early childhood up to college student level (Slavin, 2015). Previous studies have also shown that there are positive impacts through this method of learning both in mathematical skills (Artut, 2009) as well as problem solving skills (Tarim, 2009).

Introducing the subtraction operation at the early childhood seems quite difficult compared to addition operation because of initial exposure to counting activities where the value is increased. There is a difference in pupils' ability to better understand and master the chosen topic through this cooperative student-centered method of learning, as has been successfully done with a great impact in preschool children's pattern recognition skills (Tarim, 2015).

Previous studies

Suppiah (2015) in his study highlighted the concept of mathematical learning of memorization and distribution, as well as the delivery of knowledge from teachers to pupils who are not popular. This method is proven that although children may be able to solve test questions, however, they fail to apply their skills in their daily lives. This is supported by Ahmad (2009) in Ahmad Fathirul, et. al. (2015) which emphasizes the mastery of mathematical concepts coming from other than workbooks or paper assignments. Children build math knowledge and develop them through hands-on experience with real-life activities. Children need to be accustomed to using mathematical thinking in solving conflicting daily problems in helping to build their confidence in math skills that are very useful in their daily lives.

The mathematical skills to be mastered can be carried out using various appropriate methods and approaches and the cooperative learning approach is one of the most appropriate approaches to be practiced especially at the early stage of the child. According to Effendi's study (1998), cooperative learning is a teaching and learning strategy where students work together with each other in small groups to achieve the same goals. Teachers play an important role in ensuring that this approach achieves the goal. Teacher assignments should not only determine the specific knowledge and skills that students need to learn, but teachers should also tell them how to work in small groups and to conduct structured activities. In addition, students should be reminded to be responsible for achievement either individually or in groups (Effendi 1998; Azizi & Intan Safinas, 2010).

The study of Effendi (1998) coincides with an earlier study by Slavin (1990) which states that all cooperative learning methods require students to take responsibility for the learning of their teammates other than their own learning. In addition to the idea of collaboration, the student team's learning methods emphasize the use of team goals and the team's success is achievable when all members of the team commit the necessary commitments. Intan Safinas (2008) study states that cooperative learning is a common teaching strategy that can be implemented in a small group of learners where students interact

with each other to complete assignments to achieve teaching and learning objectives. It involves sharing of learning or discussion among members in their group. Co-operative learning can be tailored to any subject. This suggests that this method is very appropriate and desirable to be applied from the beginning.

Methods

This paper aligns itself to the interpretive research paradigm utilising the case study research design, derived from the constructivism philosophy of learning which works on the premise that, by reflecting on our experiences, we construct our own understanding of the world we live in. This paradigm argues that research should be viewed subjectively not objectively. The strength of case study is the ability to allow the researcher to retain the holistic characteristics of real-life events and undertake thorough investigation into a phenomenon in its particular context (Yin, 1994). A case study focuses on an entity in itself and allows in-depth examination (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010). Case study researches are also studies of multi-perspectival and often probe deeply and intensively to analyse the subject of the study (Tellis, 1997). This implies that the researcher gathers data from various actors and relevant groups of actors for a comprehensive view of the research phenomenon. In order to do this, a typical case study research uses multiple sources and evidence such as documents, interviews and observation. As such, case study is a useful method to collect and to produce extensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied, allowing a holistic comprehension of real life events (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010). The use of a case study research design provides the researcher with a systematic way of looking at events, collecting data, analyzing information, and reporting of the research results (Tellis, 1997).

Sample

This focused subject of the study was subtraction operations applying the cooperative learning method with numbers 1 to 10. This method is carried out in set groups combining various age and gender to work together. The study involved 40% of the 25 children who are currently enrolled in pre-school education in one of the preschool under the Ministry of Education in Dungun, Terengganu, Malaysia. The selection of respondents was made from the review of their existing assignments (workbook), oral and written tests (Pre-Test). Prior to sample selection, the researchers conducted discussions with the preschool teachers on the respondents' existing mathematics achievement. The researchers also asked the teachers for recommendation and suggestion regarding the selection of respondents. The chosen children (respondents) are then categorized into three levels, namely weak, moderate and skilled as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The Children's Levels in Subtraction Operation

Level	Score
Weak	0 - 3
Moderate	4 - 7
Skilled	8 - 10

The participating respondents were then divided into two groups consisting of five members in each group where age, gender, and levels were mixed. Among them a male from the skilled level was appointed the group leader. Then each participant was given a similar worksheet that contains questions related to the subtraction operations of numbers from 1 to 10. The examples of the questions were exemplified in Figure 2 and Figure 3.

Respondents were asked to complete the task by discussing with their group members. They worked together to find the right answers. At this stage, the researchers become facilitators to ensure smooth running of the activities. Observations were made during the intervention process and later the respondents' works were collected for analysis. Respondents were then interviewed to know their satisfaction with the method which they have no prior experience.
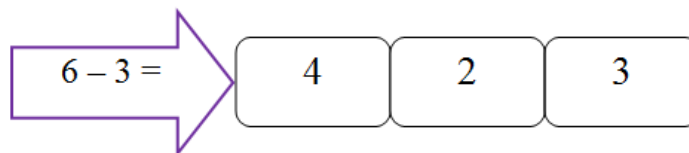

Figure 2: Example of subtraction of numbers from 1 to 10
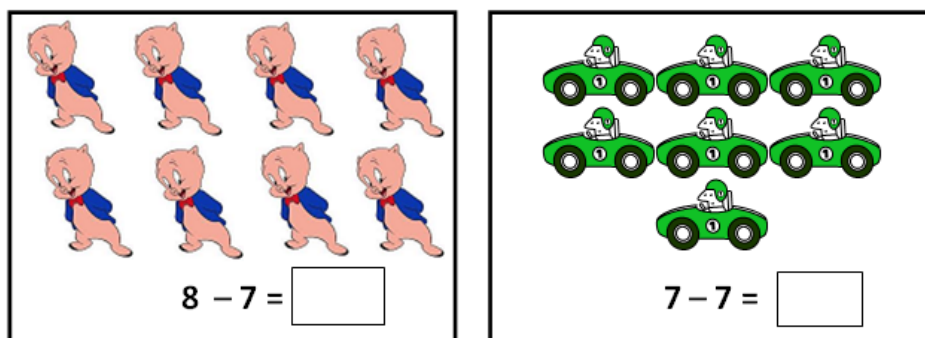
Figure 3: Examples of subtraction with pictures

Findings

The distribution of respondents according to age and gender were labeled as B5, B6, G5 and G6 (Key: B5 = Boy, 5 years old, G6 = Girl, 6 years old). While the subtraction levels were categorized as M1 = Weak, M2 = Moderate and M3 = Skilled.

Table 2: Respondents' Category and Level

Respondents	Category				Level (Subtraction Operation)		
	B5	B6	G5	G6	M1	M2	M3
1	1				1		
2				1	1		
3	1					1	
4				1		1	
5			1			1	
6	1					1	
7				1		1	
8				1			1
9		1					1
10		1					1
Total	3	2	1	4	2	5	3

Table 2 shows 10 respondents comprising 5 male and 5 female children. Out of the 10 respondents, 4 children are aged 5 years while 6 of them are 6 years old. Respondents' subtraction ability levels before the intervention were 30% skilled, 20% weak and the remaining 50% moderate.

The results for the written test scores before and after the method of cooperative learning was implemented is shown in Table 3 and further illustrated graphically (Figure 4).

Table 3: Scores in Written Test

Respondent	Score		% Increase
	Pre-Test	Post-Test	
1	2	5	30
2	3	7	40
3	4	8	40

4	5	8	30
5	5	10	50
6	6	10	40
7	6	10	40
8	8	10	20
9	10	10	0
10	10	10	0
Average	**5.9**	**8.8**	**29**
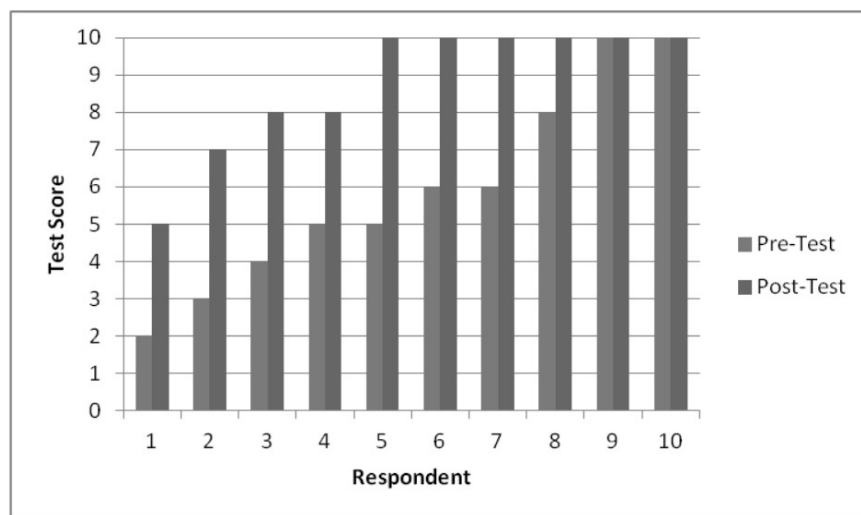
Figure 4: Graph of Scores in Written Test

Out of the 10 respondents, 8 of them had increased score. Two respondents which had full score in the instruction method maintained the same full score in cooperative learning method. Therefore the increased in subtraction ability is 80%. Overall the score increased from 5.9 to 8.8 which represent an increase of 29%. The scoring is from 0 to 10.

In answering the questions, as observed by the researchers and pre-school teachers, there existed some form of cooperation among the respondents. It was apparent that the skilled ones helped the weak ones. Respondents who are weak had the opportunity to learn better with their skilled peers. The relationship among the respondents appeared to be friendlier as well as with the researchers and teachers.

When interviewed, the 10 respondents are happy with the cooperative learning method and expressed interest in learning mathematics by this method. They said they had better understanding with this method compared with the previous method. According to them they are more likely to learn more interactively; chat, ask questions, help and learn through play.

Discussion

As educators we often seem to have preconceived ideas that our students, especially preschool children, when working in groups are rather difficult to control. Teachers feel more at ease and in more control of the situation when they use traditional instruction compared to a new approach. This study shows that children at preschool age can work as a team to solve mathematical questions. In fact they performed better than before they were in cooperative learning environment.

This study affirms previous studies (Artut, 2009; Tarim, 2009) that cooperative learning have positive impacts towards students learning of mathematics and problem solving skills. In this study, the cooperative method was found to have significant impact on the students subtraction operation. It was apparent that children communication skills are the necessity that needs to be emphasized in adopting cooperative learning method in order for the children to be thoughtful learners. In teaching and learning, beside techniques and methods, strategies play a major role which contributes to success or failure of students to master knowledge and to understand topics and concepts taught to them.

Conclusion

The use of cooperative methods in this study clearly shows that the children demonstrated better achievement compared to when they were using traditional method in doing subtraction operation. Thus, teacher-centered learning approach is not recommended as it emphasizes drilling and memorization instead of understanding. This will impact not only the students' cognitive but also their emotional level, thus endangering them to lose interest in learning. The worst implication is that it will lead to drop out and hate schooling or the education system. The *Laporan Jemaah Nazir* in 1988 found that delivery and teaching methods affect students' understanding of mathematical concepts. Specifically, the findings of the study affirmed that cooperative method is the effective method to instill mathematical thoughtful learning in students from early age. NCTM in 1989 also supported the new reforms for teaching and introducing mathematics activities by considering alternative teaching method such as cooperative method.

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"KACCHIN-KUN" - TEACHING MATERIAL FOR ESD MADE BY THE BOTTOM OF PET PLASTIC BOTTLE

Mie Oba

Abstract

This study clarifies the process to invent a teaching material for ESD and the influence to community. Inspired by a traditional dance (Niagariodori) of Fukuyama, instead of original bamboo castanets, I tried to create a playing tool for young children and teachers, to reduce waste, to recycle something and to respect our traditional culture. Finally the bottom of plastic bottle was found as a good instrument called "Kacchin-Kun" to beat with a joyful sound in 2005. Setting an elastic not to fall it out of child's hand, with colorful vinyl tape that protects the cut of bottom, children can make this lightweight and safe instrument themselves. Students of FCU, future teachers of ECEC, learn the organization of Kacchin-Kun's activities and child's development, collecting plastic bottles for off-campus activities. It functions as a training resource to practice ESD in teacher education. Now children love to make Kacchin-Kun, they collect and reuse bottles. This is a change of behavior for a sustainable life. Citizens sent thousands of bottles to university for Kacchin-Kun. A sure cycle of plastic bottles is structured   collaborating with Municipal offices. Kacchin-Kun gives children and   all generations many positive stimulus as a valuable resource for sustainable development.

Key words: Kacchin-Kun; teaching resource for ESD; reuse and recycle of PET plastic bottle; teacher education; traditional culture

Introduction

 In Fukuyama, near Hiroshima in Japan, people have respected their traditional culture like 'Niagariodori'. This dance is begun since 18th century by 'samurai' and citizen for praying the deceased and ancestors by the religion of Buddhism in the court of temples and in front of the house who lost the member of family in a year (Board of education of Fukuyama City 1983).

 After 300 years, we have a big summer festival for this dance in August every year. There is an association for keeping the traditional and classic culture and art in Fukuyama, but the experts and dancers of this dance disappear more than more because it trends the active dance with a clear beet and vital movement is liked especially by young generation. 'Niagariodori' is very noble, spiritual and simple. The music of this dance has their rhythm but it gives a classic impression. And it hasn't the text with music, so many people think it is difficult to understand this dance's world, and its quiet movement doesn't animate them. Citizen who didn't know the existence of 'Niagariodori' was great major in the people of Fukuyama (Oba 2009a).

   When I was young, I learned this traditional culture in elementary school in 1970s. I was lucky because our generation had an opportunity to study its history and original physical technique; we felt we lived in the current of history and we could master a physical movement in childhood.

I was afraid of the lack of experiences to approach to this traditional dance directly for children. In the Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we can find the right of child to access to culture: 'States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.' (OHCHR 1989)

So, at first I brushed up my dance with experts and I began to study its importance and possibility of teaching methods for young children. Concerning the documentations about 'Niagariodori' before the war, all of paper documents and phots had been burned by the American air attack to Fukuyama at 8th August in 1945; just 2 days later of the atomic bomb at Hiroshima and 1 day before for Nagasaki. The 80% of city, also the castle founded in 1622, was destroyed, people lost everything, but they began to dance 'Niagariodori' again for praying all victims, and this solidarity run as a power for the reconstruction of city. The bomb and fire burned almost everything but they could not destroy the culture fixed in people's body and soul. This dance may be a symbol of peace and solidarity in Fukuyama (Hoshino 2015).

Soon I found difficulties to teach the original 'Niagariodori' to child respecting correctly its traditional style. To it dance, we use 'Yotsudake'(four pieces of bamboo) like a castanet, this instrument was too difficult to make a rhythmical sound during dance for children who didn't have enough grasping power to hold two pieces of bamboo in each hand(Oba&Murayama 2007). This was one of the reasons that people didn't

prefer 'Niagariodori' to the other dance, I decided to create a new material to make a good similar sound easily for young children in 2005 (Oba 2009a).

The other difficulty was the absence of text with this silent dance music, the sound might be difficult for young children to correspond its physical movement without an image(Oba 2009a).

Methods

Many wastes (boxes, plastics, cans, bottles, pet-bottles etc.) was examined to beat for searching a clear sound like bamboo, as preschool teachers and educators of ECEC could collect materials easily and change them to a useful teaching tool. In Japanese public preschool, their finance is always not enough to prepare teaching materials, it is necessary to find an effective way of recycling something without buying. In 2005, I tried this examinations with my students of faculty of ECEC in Fukuyama city junior college for women (Fukuyama City University (FCU) succeeded this college in 2011).And the process and effects of these activities for 10 years are analyzed by the change of behavior for ESD of students, children and citizens.

Results

After many trials to beat and examine the sound and the safety for children to make and play, finally the bottom of pet plastic bottle was selected. At first we did beating examinations with surface of each material, but it was not successful to make a clear sound. We had valued the quality of pet plastic bottle, it is safe, clean and easy to correct and fabricate. After the earnest observation, we noticed a projection in the bottom. With an only work 'cutting a bottle' (Figure1), it was able to get a point to beat and we arrived to find a clear and similar sound like bamboo. It was a great discovery.

 How to hold the bottoms in a little hand of child is the next problem. Fabricating tools should be found in the teacher's room or in daily life, they can't spend money on them, too. We used a punch, ordinarily for snapping papers, but in this time it worked to make a hole in the bottom (Figure2) (Figure3). Between the two holes it was bridged with an elastic not to fall the bottom out of children's hands (Figure4) (Figure5). So this material making a good sound was named "Kacchin-Kun"(Mr. Kacchin), 'Kacchin' is a sound of beating bamboos, and 'Kun' represents 'Mister' in Japanese. For the safety we set colorful vinyl tapes that protected the cut of bottom (Figure6) (Figure7). Children can make it themselves with help of friends or adults. "Kacchin-Kun" is lightweight and safe instrument to make their sound.

   Many colors and joyful sounds animated everyone.

Figure1 Cutting a Pet plastic bottle

Figure2 Making a hole in the bottom

Figure3 Making two holes on the bottom

Firure4 Setting an elastic at one hole
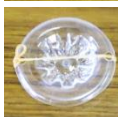
Figure5 Setting an elastic in both sides

Figure6 Putting a vinyl tape on the cut of bottom

Figure7 Kacchin-Kun

Discussion and Conclusions

Students, future teachers of early childhood education and care, of Fukuyama City University (FCU) learn how to organize the activities with "Kacchin-Kun" and they also study the relation to children's development(Oba 2015). They began to collect plastic bottles for off-campus practices and parent-child activities. "Kacchin-Kun" functioned as a training resource to practice ESD in early childhood teacher education (Oba 2012).

We have developed the activities for 10 years, children love to make "Kacchin-Kun" and play with it(Oba 2010), parents too. To fabricate more, they collect plastic bottles and reuse them. This is a change of behavior to think about the sustainable life and their environment. (Figure8)

Figure8 Parent-child activities with students for making "Kacchin-Kun"

Now, many citizens have known our activities, they sent thousands of plastic bottles to university for

children and future teachers. A sure cycle of plastic bottles for "Kacchin-Kun" in Fukuyama is structured; collaborating with Municipal offices, libraries, social centers, families and students.

We have noticed "Kacchin-Kun" is a good teaching material for the children's development and health. Its joyful sound let children smile and move spontaneously, I created a rhythmic dance 'Niagari rhythm' keeping the rhythm of traditional dance 'Niagariodori' with "Kacchin-Kun" and texts presenting the specials, sights, history and geography of Fukuyama. Children move and imitate along their image with the traditional rhythm, at the same time they can learn about their hometown (Oba 2009b). (Figure9)

Figure 9 Rhythmic dance'Niagari rhythm' with "Kacchin-Kun"

The color, sound, touch, movement and smile of person who plays together, everything with "Kacchin-Kun" gives children many positive stimulus. Now many people dance 'Niagariodori' with "Kacchin-Kun" in the summer festival in Fukuyama. (Figure10)

Figure10 'Yotsudake(bamboo, in right hand)' and "Kacchin-Kun"(in left hand)

"Kacchin-Kun" is developing as a valuable resource of ESD for young children and all generations (Oba,et al 2011). (Table1)

Table1 Activities of "Kacchin－Kun" as ESD

Reuse	PET plastic bottles
Reduce	waste
Recycle	PET plastic bottles
Redistribute	teaching material
Respect	traditional culture
Reflect	children's development
Rethink	children's development and teacher's training

Thanks to Dr. Eunhye Park (OMEP world president) and Adrijana Višnjić Jevtić (President of OMEP

Croatia), I had an opportunity to present a "Kacchin-Kun" demonstration at the closing ceremony of the 69th OMEP international conference in Opatija. It was a useful time for all participants to share the value of this resource for ESD. I hope sincerely children in the world enjoy my "Kacchin-Kun".

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DETERMINATION OF TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR OPINIONS ON PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF ACTIVITIES IN THE PRESCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAM

Ece Ozdogan Ozbal, Burçin Aysu, Figen Gürsoy & Neriman Aral

Abstract

This phenomenological study was aimed at investigating the opinions of administrators and teachers on the preschool education program and carried out with the participation of 5 school administrators and 35 preschool teachers. In the study, data aboutthe school administrators and the teachers were gathered with the "Demographic Information Form" and the semi-structured interview form was used in the determination of the opinions of the administrators and the teachers on the planning, implementation and evaluation stages of the preschool education program.The study data gathered with the qualitative interview form were analyzed with the MAXQDA software. The teachers generally prepared the programs at the beginning of the school year and frequently used ready-made plans, were attentive to preparing a child-centered and flexible preschool education program, experienced difficulty in daily evaluation, were attentive to student participation and maintaining student interest and attention during activities, and usually used the progress monitoring form in student progressevaluation. The administrators reported thatthe teachers were inadequately informed about the updated plan and that the teachers experienced difficulty with classroom management and individual differences between students. The interviews with the administrators also revealed that they were not sufficiently knowledgeable about the implementation of activities.

Introduction

Preschool education can be defined as the developmental and educational process from birth until the beginning of primary education during which physical, psychomotor, social, emotional, intellectual and linguisticdevelopment critical for children's future lives, as well as character development, mostly occur. During this period, the importance of preschool, where children can build their own environment with their peers and have a setting for a healthy and natural development, is secondary only to the family. Preschools are social institutions of education with a staff of specialist educators and education programs that aim for children's multidimensional development in a healthy and safe environment (Aral, Kandır and Can Yaşar, 2003; Oktay, 2010).Education at preschools cannot be improved or achieve its goals without adequate planning (Şimşek, 2012). An effective education program varies and takes shape according to the child's age, developmental level and environmental characteristics, as well as, the requirements of both the child and society (Aral and Can Yaşar, 2015).One of the key elements of a successful preschool education is the implementation of an effective education program, teachers implementing that program (Brostrom, Johansson, Sandberg and Frokjar, 2014) and administrators collaborating with teachers.Therefore planning, implementation and evaluation is critical for an effective education andteachers encounter numerous problems throughout these stages. School administrators are also tasked with a great responsibility to ensure teachers can administer the program effectively (Durmuşçelebi and Akkaya, 2014; Özsırkıntı, Akay and Bolat, 2014; Alvestad and Sheridan, 2015; Nair and Yassin, 2017).Determining the opinions of administrators and teachers on the planning, implementation and evaluation stages of the education program, and offering solution suggestions to the problems experienced would improve program effectiveness.The researchers believe determining the opinions of administrators and teachers would greatly contribute to eliminating the problems experienced and attaining the goals of the preschool education program. Thus, this study aimed to determine the opinions of administrators and teachers on the preschool education program.

Methods

This phenomenological study was conducted to identify the opinions of administrators and teachers regarding planning, implementing and evaluating the activities in the preschool education program. Büyüköztürk et al. (2016) characterized phenomenological research as follows: "*In phenomenological studies, data sources are individuals or groups who experience the phenomenon that constitutes the focus of the study and can express or reflect this phenomenon. Interviews are conducted to reveal experiences and meanings pertaining to phenomena.*"

The study was carried out with the participation of 5 school administrators and 35 preschool teachers. The number of female/male administrators and teachers were 3/2 and 34/1, respectively. The number of administrators aged 26-30, 31-35 and 36-40 were 1, 1 and 3 while the number of teachers aged 26-30, 31-35, 36-40 and 41 and older were 17, 10, 5 and 3, respectively. 4 of the administrators had an undergraduate degree and one had a graduate degree, while all the teachers had an undergraduate degree. The number of administrators with a length of service of 1-5, 6-10, 11-15 and 16-20 years were 1, 2, 1 and 1, while the number of teachers with a length of service of 1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20 and 21 and more years were 1, 15, 12, 1 and 6, respectively.

In the study, necessary data about the school administrators and the teachers were gathered with the "Demographic Information Form" and the semi-structured interview form was used in the determination of the opinions of the administrators and the teachers on the planning, implementation and evaluation stages of the preschool education program.

A review of literature conducted prior to the construction of the data collection instruments revealed that a similar form had not been previously developed. The draft interview form constructed after a review of literature was submitted to four domain specialists for review and the draft form was finalized to be employed in administration.

First of all, the necessary legal permits were obtained from the Provincial Directorate of National Education in Kırşehir during the 2016-2017 school year. The teachers and the administrators were informed about the aim of the study and interviews were conducted with those who agreed to participate voluntarily. During the interviews, the replies were recorded on paper by the interviewer as audio recording was not permitted.

The study data gathered with the qualitative interview form were analyzed with the MAXQDA software. In qualitative data analysis, administrator and teacher replies were categorized and analyzed separately and the results were presented with suitable graphs.

Results

The results of the study carried out to determine administrator and teacher opinions on the preschool education program are given below:

Teacher Opinions on Planning

Theteachers were inquired about the planning of the preschool education program. Their replies were evaluated and presented below:
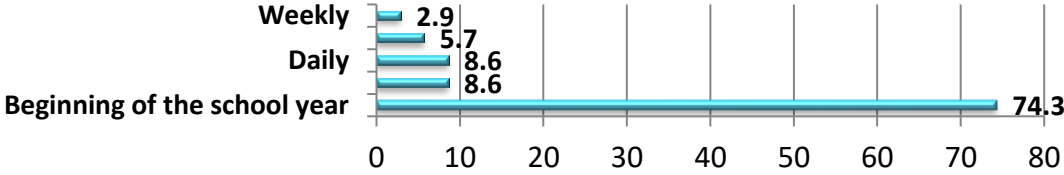

Figure 1. Teachers' Opinions on Program Preparation Time

As Figure 1 shows the great majority of the teachers reported they prepared the plan at the beginning of the school year (74%) while the percentages of those who prepared the plan at the beginning of the school term (8.6%) and of those who prepared daily plans (8.6%) were equal. In addition, some teachers reported preparing the plan monthly (5.7%) and weekly (2.9%). T32 said "*I prepare the plan at the beginning of the term when the age group of my students is specified*," and T18 said "*I prepare the plan at the beginning of the school year during the seminars.*"

All of the teachers reported that they did not conduct an original planning, did not prepare a monthly plan and used a ready-made plan as their monthly plans. T4 said "*Yes, I make adjustments to a ready-made plan,*" and T12 said "*We use ready-made plans.*"
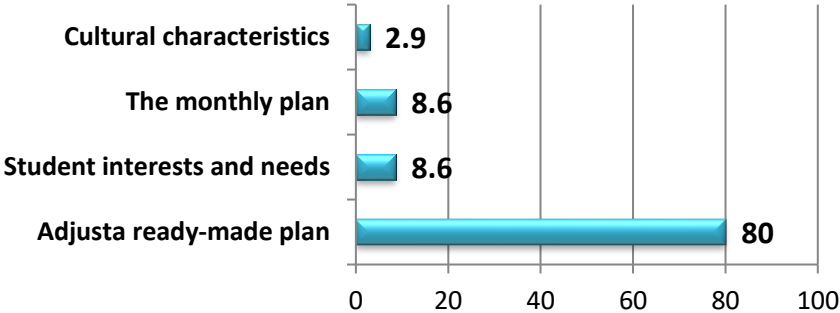
Figure 2. Teachers' opinions on their considerations when planning a daily educational schedule

As Figure 2 reveals, 80% of the participating teachers reported adjusting the daily educational schedule in a ready-made plan by removing or modifying the parts that are unsuitable for their regions or classes. 2.9% of the teachers expressed they heeded the cultural characteristics of the students, while the percentages of those who prepared the daily educational schedule according to the children's interests

and needs (8.6%) and of those who prepared the daily educational schedule in respect of the monthly plan (8.6%) were equal. T14 replied "*I pay attention to the children's cultural characteristics*," and T17 said "*I make adjustments to a ready-made plan. I make additions because it is so convenient.*"
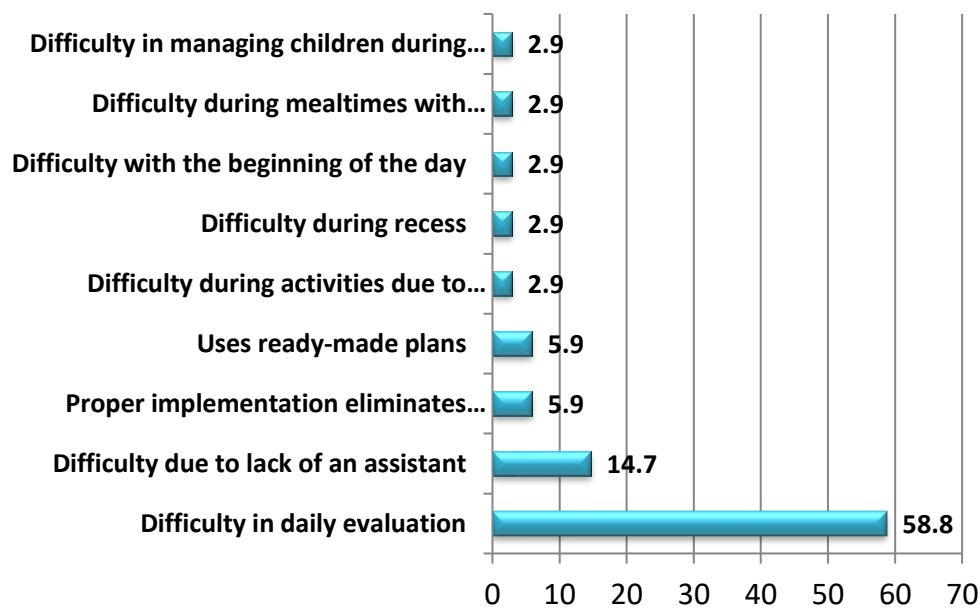
Figure 3. Teachers' opinions on the problems they experienced in planning the daily educational schedule

As Figure 3shows, 58.8% of the teachers expressed experiencing difficulty in daily evaluation while 14.7% said the lack of an assistant was a predicament when planning the daily educational schedule.In addition, 5.9% of the teachers reported the proper implementation of activities eliminated any difficulties during planning, which T14 stated as "*I don't have any difficulty because I can adjust the plan as I see fit.*" The percentages of the teachers who emphasized the poor quality of ready-made plans (2.9%) and individual differences among students (2.9%), and of those who expressed experiencing difficulty with the beginning of the day (2.9%), recess (2.9%) and mealtimes (2.9%), as well as, in managing the children during free time (2.9%) were all equal. T24 replied "*We have difficulty during recess because the children are very energetic and active*," and T1 said "*I do not have any trouble as I use a ready-made plan*," while T13 said "*Daily evaluation can a bit problematic as it is on paper.*"

Teacher Opinions on Implementation

The study group teachers were asked about the implementationof the activities in the preschool education program. Their opinionson implementation are as follows:

The teachers were queried about the problems they experienced during the implementation of the daily educational schedule.54.3% of the teachers reported having no difficulty in implementing the daily

educational schedule while the percentage of those who expressed problems in activity time, at the beginning of the day and during daily evaluation were 31.4%, 8.6% and 5.7%, respectively. T24, one of the teachers who experienced difficulty during activities, replied "*Some activities cannot be completed within lesson time and have to be resumed the next day, while other activities might leave some spare time, in which case we perform additional activities.*" From among the teachers who had difficulty with daily evaluation, T7 replied "*It is difficult to gather the class at departure time. At the same time, parents also want to have a talk,*" and T33 said "*Children become exhausted and bored.*"

Another question asked to the teachers was "What are your considerations when implementing the activities you have planned?" The teachers reported being attentive to the participation of all students (36%), maintaining children's interest and attention (30.3%), promoting student progress (18.2%), classroom order (6.1%), activity hours (6.1%) and utilization of materials (3%). T25 said "*I carry out the activities according to the developmental characteristics of each child,*" and T18 said "*I make sure every student participates in the activity,*" while T35 replied "*I try to implement the plan but sometimes cannot adhere to the time schedule.*"

The teachers were inquired as to the activity they had the most difficulty with during implementation.22.9% of the teachers reported encountering no difficulty with activities while 45.7% said they had the most difficulty during field trips. The teachers expressed experiencing difficulty in science activities (14.3%), drama activities (8.6%), pre-reading and pre-writing activities (5.7%) and during free play (2.9%). T23 reported difficulty during pre-reading and pre-writing activities by saying "*I have difficulty in pre-reading and pre-writing activities as children's hand muscles are not yet fully developed,*" while T2 replied "*I have difficulty with individual differences while using printed material,*" and T9 said "*I have difficulty with attending to the students individually during free time.*" T4 emphasized difficulty in science activities by saying "*Sometimes we don't have the necessary materials,*" and T8 said "*We have transportation difficulties with the school bus. Keeping the children together is another problem,*" expressing difficulty during field trips.

Teacher Opinions on Evaluation

The teachers participating in the study were queried about the evaluation of the preschool education program. Their replies are given below:

When the teachers were asked "Do you experience any problems in evaluating the daily educational schedule?" 52.8% expressed experiencing no difficulty in the evaluation of the daily educational schedule. However, the teachers reported having difficulty with evaluation time (25%), the beginning of the day (8.3%), meal times (8.3%), activities (2.8%) and recess (2.8%). T20 replied "*The insufficient number of*

learning centers is challenging," T18 said "*Not all the children arrive at the same time at the beginning of the day*," T34 responded "*Students do not arrive at the same time and the lesson is interrupted each time*," and T5 said "*I forget.*"

68.6% of the teachers conducted an evaluation with respect to the students, the teacher and the program while there were some who reported not conducting an evaluation (31.4%). T25 replied "*My evaluations include the students, the teacher and the program.*"

The majority of the teachers (%76.3) reported using the Progress Monitoring Form in the evaluation of student progress while others used methods such as portfolios (7.9%), activity files (5.3%), note taking (5.3%) and parent meetings (2.6). Some of the teachers did not wish to answer the question (2.6%).
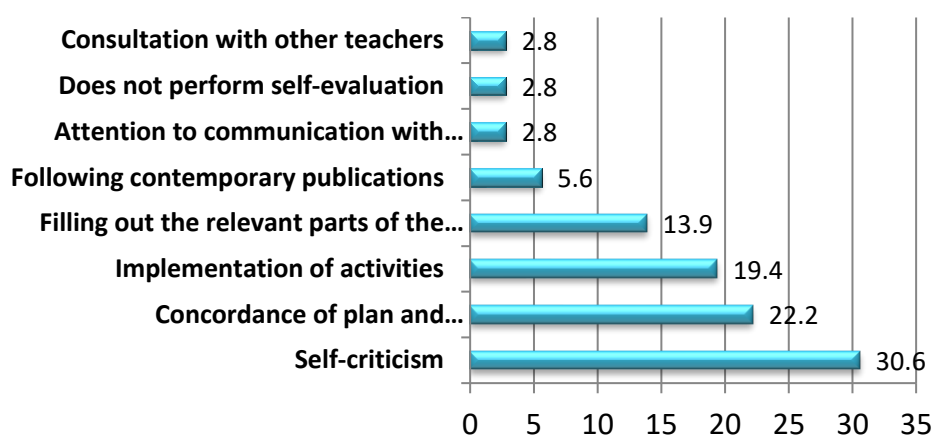
Figure 4. Teachers' opinions on their self-evaluation activities

Figure 4 shows the distribution of the teacher replies to the question "What do you do during self-evaluation?" The teachers reported engaging in self-criticism (30%), examining the concordance of plan and implementation (22.2%), assessing the implementation of activities (19.4%), following contemporary publications (5.6%) and paying attention to communication with the students during self-evaluation.2.8% of the teachers said they consulted with other teachers while 2.8% revealed they did not perform any self-evaluation. In addition, 13.9% of the teachers reported filling out the relevant parts of the plan.

Administrator Opinions on Planning, Implementation and Evaluation

The replies of the study group administrators to the questions developed to identify their opinions on planning, implementation and evaluation are presented below:

The administrators were asked whether teachers conducted any planning for the preschool eduation program. They pointed out that teachers generally used ready-made plans and did not carry out an original planning on their own.

The administrators reported 66.7% of the teachers ensured active student participation while 33.3% took student progress into consideration in implementing activities. The most common issues teachers experienced during implementation as highlighted by the administrators were class management (50%) and catering to individual differencesbetween students (50%).All of the administrators reported that teachersfilled out the relevant parts of the plan for the evaluation of the daily educational process.

The administrators participating in the study reported that teachers did not perform any self-evaluation (33.3%), that teachers filled out the relevant parts of the plan (33.3%) and that evaluative school meetings were organized (33.3%).

In addition, the administrators were inquired as to the causes of the problems experienced in the daily education schedule. The administrators emphasized teachers' lack of knowledge on the updated plan as the most important cause of problems.

Discussion

The results of the study aimed to determine the opinions of administrators and teachers on the preschool education program revealed the great majority of the teachers prepared the plan at the beginning of the school year. All of the teachers participating in the study utilized ready-made plans to develop their monthly plans. In the preschool education program, the teacher is expected to construct monthly educational plans.A monthly plan is an educational plan comprising the achievements and indicators, concepts, field trips and special days and weeks, as well as, parent participation and evaluation in order to develop activities aimed at promoting progress in a group of students (Ministry of National Education, 2013).

Planning, in general terms, is establishing how educational activities can be conducted in a well-organized manner in advance. As a pedagogical term, planning is the determination of which educational activities will be selected to achieve specific educational goals and program objectives, as well as, how and why these activities will be implemented, which assistive and supplementary sources and materials will be used, and how an evaluation will be performed. Systematical and well-planned teaching ensures both efficiency and facilitation (Demirel, 2004). Therefore, albeit making use of ready-made plans, the construction of a plan is essential.

80% of the participating teachers reported adjusting the daily educational schedule in a ready-made plan by removing or modifying the parts that are unsuitable for their regions or classes. 2.9% of the teachers expressed they heeded the cultural characteristics of the students, while the percentages of those who prepared the daily educational schedule according to the children's interests and needs (8.6%) and of those who prepared the daily educational schedule in respect of the monthly plan (8.6%) were equal. The daily educational schedule is a framework plan that comprises the activities to be carried out by the teacher on a particular day. The daily educational schedule is prepared according to the monthly plan and, at the same time, acts as a guide for the following day. The teacher must consider student suggestions offered during the evaluation of the previous day when planning the daily educational schedule of the following day (Ministry of National Education, 2013). As a result, the utilization of ready-made planswouldnegatively impact adequate planning of daily educational schedules.

Another study result pertains to the problems the teachers experienced in planning the daily educational schedule. More than half of the teachers expressed difficulty in daily evaluation, which indicates a problem concerning the activities teachershave to perform during daily evaluation which is also left blank in the ready-made plans.In addition, some of the teachers said the lack of a classroom assistant was a predicament.5.9% of the teachers reported the proper implementation of activities eliminated any difficulties during planning. Furthermore, the percentages of the teachers who emphasized the poor quality of ready-made plans and individual differences among students, and of those who expressed experiencing difficulty with the beginning of the day, recess and mealtimes, as well as, in managing the children during free time were all equal.The teachers' replies highlight their need for assistant staff in the classroom. Pramling Samuelsson, Williams, Sheridan and Hellman (2016) found that teachers preferred a smaller class size. 54.3% of the teachers reported having no difficulty in implementing the daily educational schedule while the percentage of those who expressed problems in activity time, at the beginning of the day and during daily evaluation were 31.4%, 8.6% and 5.7%, respectively. The high frequency of problems experienced during activities could be associated with the unsuitability of the planned program for the students and poor classroom management skills. The study by Kandır, Özbey and İnal (2010) reported evaluation as the issue the teachers had the most difficulty with during the preparation of daily plans. Durmuşçelebi and Akkaya (2011) found similar results and concluded that the implementation of the "Evaluation" aspect of the program was regarded negatively by preschool teachers.

When inquired about their considerations in the implementation of the activities they had planned, the teachers said they were attentive to the participation of all students (36%), maintaining children's interest and attention (30.3%), promoting student progress (18.2%), classroom order (6.1%), activity hours (6.1%) and utilization of materials (3%).Attention to student participation could be attributed to the teachers'

preference of organizing activities for large groups and their expectation for all students to participate in the same activity. The primary emphasis in the implementation of education programs in preschools is familiarity with children's developmental characteristics and careful consideration should be given to the achievements and indicators designated in the program at all times. Some activities should be carried out with the entire group while others with smaller groups and sometimes the teacher may need to work one-to-one with the student. The educational environment should be organized in consideration of the possibility that children might engage in different activities at the same time. During implementation, subjects the student is better at should be prioritized and the activities included in the program should help children relate to daily life. Parental participation through the course of education is important for establishing desirable student behavior. Therefore, it is greatly beneficial to introduce activities parents could carry out at home by organizing activities at school (Oktay, 2002, Aral, Kandır and Can Yaşar, 2002; Vuorinen, Sandberg, Sheridan, and Williams, 2014).

The distribution of the teacher replies to the inquiry as to the activity they had the most difficulty implementing showed that 22.9% of the teachers reported no difficulty with activities while 45.7% said they had the most difficulty during field trips. In addition, the teachers expressed experiencing difficulty in science activities (14.3%), drama activities (8.6%), pre-reading and pre-writing activities (5.7%) and during free play (2.9%). This could indicate that the problems teachers had during activities stemmed from factors other than the updated program. In the study by Karamustafaoğlu and Kandaz (2006) that investigated the problems preschool teachers encountered during science and nature activities, lack of laboratories where teachers can comfortably perform activities, loss of control in crowded classrooms, inappropriate scientific concepts for student level, physical environment, inadequate equipment and materials, and inadequate teacher knowledge on concept mapping, analogy and project work were the most frequent complaints teachers reported. Furthermore, the study by Kızıltaş (2016) indicated field trips with integrated activities favorably affected children's social-emotional development and Koç (2015) found %59 of preschool teachers did not organize any field trips designated in the preschool education program.

When inquired if they experienced any problems in the evaluation of the daily educational schedule, 52.8% of the teachers expressed experiencing no difficulty in the evaluation of the daily educational schedule. However, the teachers reported having difficulty with evaluation time (25%), the beginning of the day (8.3%), meal times (8.3%), activities (2.8%) and recess (2.8%).During daily evaluation time, the entire group congregates and the teacher performs an evaluation with the collaboration of the students about subjects such as the games played and activities conducted at particular learning centers, as well as, the environment and the materials through engaging in open-ended questions as much as possible. The teacher should be attentive to ensuring active student participation to the planning process by asking

the students what they wish to do as part of the next day's education and activities (Aral and Can Yaşar, 2015). During daily evaluation time, as a result of the simultaneous departure of students, teachers have difficulty in keeping track of the departing students, speaking with the parents and controlling the remaining children at the same time, and thus experience difficulty in planning and utilizing this period.

The teacher replies to the question on the stages they included in the evaluation of the activities in the Preschool Education Program showed that 68.6% of the teachers conducted an evaluation with respect to the students, the teacher and the program while there were some who reported not conducting an evaluation (31.4%).In the preschool education program, evaluation is performed in various aspects including detailed and holistic monitoring of the child's progress in all developmental domains, writing a monitoring report, thorough assessment of the plans prepared and implemented,and teacher self-evaluation (Aral and Can Yaşar, 2015). It is critical to develop educational activities based on the achievements specified in the program and to monitor the degree of attainment of the learning outputs expected from the children throughout, and as a result of, the activities. Therefore, evaluation in preschool education is a fundamental element of the educational process.

When inquired as to what they did to evaluate student progress, the majority of the teachers reported using the Progress Monitoring Form in the evaluation of student progress while others used methods such as portfolios (7.9%), activity files (5.3%), note taking (5.3%) and parent meetings (2.6). Some of the teachers did not wish to answer the question (2.6%).

The distribution of the teacher replies to the inquiry as to what they did for self-evaluation showed that the teachers reported engaging in self-criticism (30%), examining the concordance of plan and implementation (22.2%), assessing the implementation of activities (19.4%), following contemporary publications (5.6%) and paying attention to communication with the students during self-evaluation. 2.8% of the teachers said they consulted with other teachers while 2.8% revealed that they did not perform any self-evaluation. In addition, 13.9% of the teachers reported filling out the relevant parts of the plan. The administrators participating in the study reported that the teachers did not perform any self-evaluation (33.3%), that the teachers filled out the relevant parts of the plan (33.3%) and that school meetings were conducted (33.3%).One of the methods employed to raise awareness on the classroom performance of teachers and taking necessary measures is teacher self-evaluation, which promotes teacher motivation, increases their creativity, and helps them to become reflective teachers and to empower themselves through realizing their shortcomings. Teachers are expected to perform self-evaluations by carefully analyzing the data gathered from their evaluation of the program and the students, identifying their own interests, skills and inclinations, and reviewing their personality traits (Ministry of National Education,

2013). School meetings should be organized in order to raise awareness on the subject and administrators should set an example on program evaluation, and provide guidance and supervision.

When inquired about how teachers implemented activities, the administrators reported 66.7% of the teachers ensured active student participation while 33.3% took student progress into consideration in implementing activities. Moreover, the administrators were asked which problems teachers experienced most during implementation. The administrators reported individual differences between students (50%) and class management (50%) as the most common issues teachers experienced during implementation. In consideration of the importance of effective classroom management for individual differences between children, it is possible to postulate the administrators believed that the classroom management skills of the teachers required improvement.

All of the administrators reported the teachers filled out the relevant parts of the plan for the evaluation of the daily educational process and the activities.

When inquired as to how teachers performed self-evaluation, the administrators reported that the teachers did not perform any self-evaluation (33.3%), that the teachers filled out the relevant parts of the plan (33.3%) and that school meetings were conducted (33.3%).The comparison of the administrator and teacher replies revealed the administrators were informed about the evaluations recorded in the plan and the teacher feedback conveyed during school meetings but were not aware of the other activities the teachers performed for self-evaluation. School meetings where teachers could communicate the self-evaluation activities they conducted and administrators could learn about these self-evaluation activities can be organized.

The administrators were also asked about the causes of the problems experienced in the daily education schedule. They opined thatthe teachers were not adequately knowledgeable about the updated plan, which indicates the teachers should informed about the importance of program evaluation and about the updated program. Demir and Arı (2013) similarly identified frequently changing programs and legislation as one of the most disruptive issues for teachers.

In conclusion, the administrators were not sufficiently informed about the implementation of activities and they left educational affairs completely to the teachers, which the researchers believe were the cause of the discrepancies between the administrator and the teacher replies.

Conclusion and recommendations

The teacher interview results of the study aimed to investigate the opinions of administrators and teachers on the preschool education program can be summarized as follows:

- They mostly prepared the programs at the beginning of the school year and frequently utilized ready-made plans.
- They were attentive to preparing a child-centered and flexible preschool education program.
- They experienced difficulty in daily evaluation.
- They were attentive to student participation and maintaining student interest and attention during activities.
- They mostly used the progress monitoring form in the evaluation of student progress.
- The results of the interviews conducted with the administrators are given below:
- The teachers were inadequately informed about the updated plan.
- The teachers experienced difficulty with classroom management and individual differences between students.
- The administratorswere not sufficiently knowledgeable about the implementation of activities.
- In view of the study results, the researchers would like to make the following recommendations:
- Greater practice opportunity should be provided to teachers for program development and class management beginning with undergraduate education.
- Teachers should follow new developments particularly about program updates.
- Teachers should be continually supported and evaluated through organized and well-planned in-service trainings. These trainings should be developed in collaboration with universities and full teacher attendance must be ensured.
- School administrators should be equipped with the adequate knowledge to provide guidance and supervision for teachers.
- Administrators should be informed about planning, implementation and evaluation to promote administrator-teacher collaboration.

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EARLY INTERVENTION FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDERS THROUGH A SYSTEM OF MOBILE SERVICES IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Ivanka Pejić

Abstract

Legislation regulations from the field of preschool education in the Croatia mentions a possibility of organizing a systematic early intervention (EI) program from the sixth month of age, but in practice such an intervention is not carried out systematically but through projects co-financed by the ministry.

The program of EI for children suspected or diagnosed with autism from detecting difficulties up to 4 years of age is carried out since 2008. in the local community.

The program has made it possible for over 300 families with children with autism to engage in program activities and individual patronage work with a child.

While working with children and educating parents we use the knowledge and experience of visual layouts, alternative assisted communication, sensory-integrative pedagogy, dance and movement therapy. For the siblings of our little users an art workshop is organized, and the parents enhance their parental competences through support groups under the guidance of psychologists. The social worker informs the parents about the rights arising from the social and health care law.

The association and the Center work closely with other local institutions which through their programs provide various forms of support for children and their parents in order to systematicly organize an early intervention program in the local community.

The Alliance of Autism Associations in Croatia (SUZAH) and the association chairman advocate to implement the early intervention system on a national level. Mrs. Penko is a member of the Expert Commission of the project „National standards for early detection and diagnosis of autism spectrum disorders" of the Republic of Croatia.

Key words: Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder; Early Intervention; Low Regulation; Mobile Service; Systematic Solution

Introduction

According to dr. Bednjak in the Republic of Croatia in 2017. there is 511850 (11,9%) persons with disabilities registered. There are 1925 persons (0.4%) with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (PAS) registered at the Croatian Public Health Institute. In the county of Primorsko-goranska (PGŽ), 182 (0.8%) persons were registered with PAS (page 35).

The project "Establishment of a national framework for early diagnosis and early intervention for children (0-7) with autistic spectrum disorders" was organized by the UNICEF office for Croatia, the Center for Rehabilitation of the Faculty of education and rehabilitation, the Ministry of social policy and youth, the Ministry of health and the Ministry of science, education and sports in order to organize a comprehensive and lifelong system network for children and people with PAS.

Namely, the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia defines the rights of disabled children on care, education and social care, and the obligations of parents, institutions and others in exercising these rights. The health system allows parents the right to leave or work in a shortened working time up to the 8th year of their child's life until the social care system in Art. 82 offers early intervention services. In the pre-school education system, which is not compulsory, inclusion and upbringing of a child may start at the age of six months and last until the beginning of the elementary school education of the child.

However, in practice, the stated needs and rights for children with disabilities or diagnosis are largely realized by civil society organizations through programs and projects funded from different sources.

The Ministry of Social Policy and Youth funded the mentioned three-year early intervention programs from 2008 to 2017 with € 300,000.00. The latest program for the period 2017-2020. is financed by MDOMSP for the area of the City of Rijeka and the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County (PGŽ) with 117,000.00 €.

The program leader is the Association for the care of autistic persons of Rijeka (parents' association), while the partners from the Center for autism - Zagreb, the unit of Rijeka, the children's kindergarten Rijeka and the Center for social welfare Rijeka, are the professional carriers of program activities.

Methodical Approach to The Organization of Early Intervention Services at The Local Level

Importance of Early Intervention

Early intervention is defined through all forms of child-centered advocacy and parent-oriented counseling that are applied as the direct and immediate consequences of some established developmental condition. Early intervention involves a child as well as his parents, family, and the wider network. (Ljubešić, page 29)

As a basic element of the early intervention program, there is a timely detection and early involvement of the child in the treatment with the intensity of 20 to 30 hours per week; in an organized and structured environment; with educated staff; with an individualized educational plan based on the childs needs, which teaches the child communication and social skills, play, self-help skills, sensory development, and high parent involvement (Stahmer, 2007).

An Interdisciplinary Support Model in The Local Community

The Early Intervention Program (RI) for children with PAS connects educational institutions, social welfare institutions and associates in the healthcare system from Kantrida clinical hospital center (KBC). The local community has been sensitized through the media. Pediatricians have been informed about the RI program and behaviors (early signs) indicate PAS. They notice the difficulties in children, inform the parents and direct them towards the RI program. Parallely, parents often go to medical examinations at KBC for suspected hearing and vision impairments, EEG of the baby, and the medical staff directs them to the RI program. KBC experts connect parents with the RI program, where they stay untill the child is 4 years old.

Therefore, apart from direct rehabilitative work with children whose aim is to influence a more favorable developmental outcome for a child, it is important to affect the quality of life of the whole family.

Early Intervention Program Users

The program provides expert support to families and timely and appropriate procedures for children with suspected and / or diagnosed PAS or from experiencing difficulties from the autism spectrum for children up to 4 years of age.

Program activity services were since 2008 provided to 308 families with children aged from 15 months to 4 years of age. The average age of the children was 32 months.

After the 4th year of the child's life, the parents are pointed to the diagnosis and the need to involve the child in pre-school programs in order to train social and communication skills in the peer-minded, inclusive environment.

Early Intervention System Organization

Research suggests that the "golden standard" in autism diagnostics includes measuring instruments Autism Diagnostic Intervju-Revised (ADI-R; Lord, Rutter i Le Couteur, 1994), Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule-2 (ADOS-2; Lord i sur., 2012) and that collecting data from parents and observing the childs behavior increases consistency in the application of diagnostic criteria (Risi et al., 2006).

By submitting to the program parents complete questionnaires about the child, its specifics, strengths and needs (birth, early life, eating, sleeping, motoric development, communication, play with toys).

Mobile Service - Professional Support Program for Families Included in The Early Intervention Program

The Mobile Service - professional support program group for the family (IPPO) is made up of a university specialist in early intervention and in educational rehabilitation, psychologist and a speech therapist, 7 rehabilitators, musicologist and a professor of arts.

The University Specialist of early Interventions in educational rehabilitation, the psychologist and the speech therapist become fimiliar the child and family specifics through the questionnaire. In the family atmosphere as the safest and most protected, environment known to the child, childrens skills are observed with diagnostic instruments: ADOS 2, Nepsy, Vineland, WISC IV, Reynell.

Early detection is important in providing opportunities to improve all of your child's potential through timely and individualized intervention, education and rehabilitation programs.

The child is observed in a structured game, its motor skills and sensory characteristics are observed as well as its speaking communication and social skills, behaviors that can differ from the current age of the child and are preventing the childs engagement in activities, collaboration and learning.

If early signs of autism are not noticable, parents are informed where and which are the appropriate and accessible programs their child can be included in.

If early signs of autism are noticed (underdeveloped communication, slower language development, social skills, stereotypical and repetitive behaviors), parents and family are actively involved in the program and informed about the activities. Parents sign consent for attendance in all the activities of the program and the obligation to carry out the tasks and instructions to access and work with the child in the family, and consent to video recording of the child during the education and rehabilitation procedures.

Mobile Education and Rehabilitation Support Service - Child Support Program (IOOP)

After the observation and determination of the childs development profile, a report on observation and an individualized plan and work program (IOOP) is written for each child in the program.

Rehabilitators carry out individual educational rehabilitation procedures with the child in the presence of the parents, and how the access and mode of work can be transmitted / generalized in the family atmosphere and practiced until the next meeting.

Speech therapist observes the childs language skills and specialties, and writes IOOP. He/she explains it and advises parents how to run the program within the family. When the child acquires the tasks from the program, parents come to a new counseling and making a new work plan.

The musicologist individually and in small groups (up to three children), in the presence of family-parents, carries out music workshops where instruments and music are used in order to strengthen the child's interest and functional use of the material, as well as the development of imitation and vocalization.

Psychologist with an individual approach teaches and assists parents in understanding the specific behavior and skills of children in the spectrum. Through monthly support groups the psychologist enhances parental competence and participates in forming a network of support for all involved parents and family members.

At the same time, peer group gathering is organized for groups of 5-8. In the space equipped with sensory materials, the gathering is managed by rehabilitators for small groups of children where individually acquired skills are practiced as a prerequisite for inclusion in preschool programs.

The visual arts professor at the same time carries out art workshops for brothers and sisters of small users aged 4-12 years in order to create and develop empathy, to accept, to tolerate and to strengthen feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem. In this way, brothers and sisters create a sense of attachment and a support group for the future is formed.

When the family leaves the early intervention program, the expert team helps them in the transition program and the organization of inclusion of children with PAS into an appropriate form of pre-school education.

A social worker informs parents about the rights arising out of the social and retirement care system as well as helping them to:

a) Family: leave for child care, right to work in reduced working time (1/2 working time), right to work part-time (half-time), extended maternity leave up to 8 years and the status of the parent caregiver (up to the 65. year of parents life in the amount of 2,500.00 kn)

b) child: free kindergarten, the right of a child with a disability to a supplementary child support up to 27 years of age of the child in the amount of 831,50 kn, personal disability 1,250.00 kn, assistance and care support 500,00 Kn, and the right for free supplementary insurance (840,00 kn per year).

These rights may be used by parents after the expert diagnosed the child with PAS. Parents mostly decide about categorization just before school enrollment (with six year old children).

At the end of the pedagogical year, a report on the growth and success of the child recorded through program activities, suggestions are given to parents for work and access to the child during summer and / or entering a new pre-school program.

Parental evaluation / satisfaction with the program as well as self-evaluation of experts involved in the program is carried out.

Results of The Early Intervention Program 2008. – 2017.

Collaboration of all local factors, public sensitization, ever earlier inclusion of families with children in programs has resulted in the growth and development of childrens skills and abilities and the strengthening of the families capacities.

Based on inclusive procedures, children are included in regular pre-school programs - with the help of assistants funded by parents and / or other sources in the city of Rijeka; in educational programs with a regular program or in an inclusive program of the childrens kindergarten Rijeka. A smaller number of children are included in the educational programs with a special program.

Discussion

Early intervention programs should prevent possible functional deviations, which may eventually arise in cases of "sufficiently clear clinical picture" of some developmental difficultiesis being awaited, ie when the time for specific stimulation of development is missed. (Škrinjar, 2004)

The early intervention stimulates growth and development of the child in order to develop maximum abilities and skills, thus creating preconditions for the inclusion in adequate preschool programs. This allows the child to be independent in everyday life skills, prevents the risk of inadequate teaching; parents are taught by appropriate educational practices, they are encouraged to create a balanced emotional relationship within the family and prevent unwanted behavior due to developmental difficulties.

Following the needs of children / pupils and parents enrolled in regular pre-school education systems as well as good inclusive practices, the program bearer and partners continue cooperation with pre-school institutions where early intervention program beneficiaries are already involved.

The Mobile Expert Team (MST) of the Center for Autism in Zagreb, the organization unit of Rijeka with the decision of the education and upbringing agency (AZOO) since 2015. supports the experts in conditions of inclusive education, informs and educates specialists on autism specifics and access to system organization and teaching, provides assistance in developing IOOP, monitors the child / student and supports the family in the transition process and inclusive conditions.

Conclusion

Early intervention programs that include children with developmental disabilities that provide adequate educational and rehabilitation support are valuable experiences for the child as well as for the family. The

application of early individualized education and rehabilitation programs for children with PAS contribute to the affirmation of the person with an autistic spectrum disorder (Pejić, p. 76).

The results of early intervention in children with special needs up to three years of age indicate the ability of children to adopt skills and behaviors typical of the regular population and the value of incorporating the child into pre-school educational programs. When it comes to involving a child in a regular kindergarten program, it is important to evaluate the childs abilities and difficulties, and to identify the childs needs so that such a form of involvement can help and not harm the child. (Sowell, 2004)

By organizing early childhood and family intervention and the ability to educate and train for appropriate occupations, the dependence of the child and the family on social and pension rights and the institutions that provide them diminishes.

According to Graham Allen, the result of early intervention programs are savings of $ 23 million over four years, through strengthening early intervention programs and linking multiple agencies and institutions working with families strengthen their capacities (page 45).

Early intervention program development services strategy

In line with the positive practice of early intervention program in the county of Primorsko-goranska, we expect the separation of the Center for Autism - Zagreb, the unit of the Rijeka unit into the independent institution of the City of Rijeka and the inclusion of the mentioned program activities as an integral part of the Center for Autism Rijeka.

Namely, on December 19, 2013, the Department of science, Education and sports (MZOS), class 602-02 / 13-005-00035 issued consent to the implementation of verified programs: early intervention, sensory integration, mobile expert team (MST), additional rehabilitation program (DDR), psychomotor reeducation in the institute Center for autism-Zagreb, unit of organization Rijeka.

The program and the needs of children and families are recognized as an important segment of services and are included in the social plan of the county of Primorsko-goranska in 2017.-2020.

Therefore, it is expected from the competent ministries to identify the needs of children and families, the importance and value of implementation of the early intervention programs as well as the results by 2020. into existing systems and institutions. This enables timely procedures for the child and the support to the childrens family, not just with autism but with all the difficulties.

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THE BRIDGE/GATE TYPE OF GAMES FROM VOJVODINA IN THE LIGHT OF COMPARATIVE STUDIES

Kristina Planjanin Simić

Abstract

The empirical research of children's folklore in Vojvodina, has unfortunately remained a less studied domain within the ethno musicological research. The importance of studying this neglected folklore genre seemed to us even more important since it enables us to clarify and present one of the most important ethno musicological issues which are tightly connected to the child psychology. Children folklore is preparing the pre-school children to learn in the most natural, free and relaxed manner, within the same-age children group. The songs of these bridge/gate type of games belong to the games of crossing over, games of initiation. (Medan 1980, 47). This type of games of crossing over, of crossing the bridge as if from one state to another, symbolically represents a universal state of each and everyone of us. On our road to growing up and getting mature each of us goes through, regardless of the lyrics, melody line, ethnicity or the language the game is played on, we all follow the same rules. Some of the authors rightfully consider the children as being the best keepers of the national traditions. Observing generally, children folklore affects the physical and mental development, as well as the intellectual and emotional growth and the intelligence of children. Once the opportunity of naturally getting through the childhood, through games and countings is lost, it can never again be compensated.

Key words: *bridge/gate type of games; children's folklore; comparative studies; intelligence.*

Introduction

The subject of children's folklore in Vojvodina has largely remained on the margins of ethnomusicological research. With an aim to shed light on this folkloric category, the intention of the author of this work was a comprehensive ethnomusicological study which would present the category of children's folklore, significant and essential for children's development in general. As researchers remarked in the twentieth century: "*If at least now, belatedly, even fragmentarily we came to know our so-called children's folklore, we would be on the way to understand folklore in general.*" (Ljubinković,1978, p. 57-58)

A study titled "Typology of Romanian children's folklore in Serbian Banat. Rhymes" (Planjanin Simić, 2016) is a result of research conducted during the last decades of the twentieth and in early twenty-first century, performed in several stages in 12 settlements[6] in Serbian part of Banat. The entire collected, recorded and analysed musical-folkloric material is founded on the personal ethnomusicological fieldwork in the period between 25, May 1999 and 16, January 2012. During that research, the majority of examples have been obtained from Romanian ethnic group, i.e. performed mainly in Romanian language, while there are also samples recorded in Serbian language, which make an equally relevant repertoire of the studied region. In this paper, musical samples that are part of the collected material of the mentioned study will be presented.

Methods

Several scientific methods have been applied in the collection of musical-folkloric material:

- the method of direct observation,
- comparative method,
- interviews and
- experimental method.

In the classification of ethnomusicological material, the main criteria have been: the purpose of children's songs, their function, thematic contents, and analysis of musical structures of certain folkloric sub-categories of children's folklore. In that sense, there is a distinction between songs that adults dedicated to children, i.e. folklore for children (for instance, lullabies and songs for the play with children), and children's folklore, which comprises songs that children sing themselves, at the same time (re)creating them.

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[6] Ethnomusicological research was conducted in the following settlements: Uzdin , Kuštilj, Vojvodinci, Mesić, Jablanka, Pančevo, Dolovo, Banatsko Novo Selo, Zrenjanin, Sočica, Torak i Markovac.

Results

In many European countries, just as is the case in Serbia, there is no uniform classificatory system for vocal musical tradition. Based on the recorded and analysed samples, as well as the models established by researchers who already addressed this topic (Fracile,1989, p.522), the musical material has been structured into the following sub-categories: *rhymes*, *formulaic songs*, i.e. children's songs dedicated to different birds or animals, and *songs that follow certain children's games*, which have the shape of "kolo"(circles) in two opposed lines or which are performed with particular hand and leg movements. Considering the recorded samples during the research on the mentioned folkloric zone, the *songs that follow certain children's games* have been further divided into the following sub-categories, based on the form of the games:

- Songs following "kolo"(circle) dance
- Songs following "hand" games
- Songs following other games:

    (1)   Ball games with singing

    (2)   Gate, bridge or passage type of games

    (3)   Games performed in two opposed lines.

A separate category is defined for songs of various themes.[7] The songs that follow a game, such as "Pui, pui zenta" and "Sita, sita, penda" (ex. 153,154)[8] represent children's games in the form of bridge gate/gate or a door of "kolo" (circle dance), passage or bridge, with moving of the hands under the hands of fellow dancers. It is interesting that this game, under the same name, is also played by children in some villages in Dobrogea in Romania, where it also holds the name "Pui, pui zerda", according to Emilia Comișel.

153

PUI, PUI, ZENTA

Măria Rotariu Cordân, 68 de ani,
Coștei, 09.01.2000

(cca ♩=108)

Pu - i, pu - i, zen - ta, zen - ta va - laci - ca,

Cio - co - la - da craci - ca.   etc...   O.F.

(Comișel,1982, p.238)

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[7] Their functions are different, they do not belong to any of the previously stated and for some of these songs, the real purpose can only be speculated about. Due to the lack of similar examples and the appropriate terminology for classification, it was necessary to name this sub-group "songs of various themes".

[8] Description of the game: "Two children hold each other by their hands and raise them. Other children, be it one, two, three or more, walk one behind the other and pass under their arms. They sing „Pui, pui zenta". At the end of the song, at the verse 'zap, ser, zap!', the two children lower the hands and grab the child that is passing at that moment. The caught child has to leave the game and stand aside. The other kids continue the game." Măria Rotariu Kordân, Mg-dipl 1/40.

The recorded game called "Podu-l de piatră" ("Stone bridge")[9], (ex. 152) is performed similarly to the previous ones.

154

SITA, SITA, PENDA

(cca ♩=88)

Ana Pardos, 57 de ani,
Coștei, 7.12.2002

Si - ta, si - ta, pen - da, za - mo - ru - ci ten - da,

ten - da zap, zel - ta, zel - ta, zel - ta va - laci - ca,

O.F.

Cio - co - la - da craci - ca. ve - ro - ta, ve - ro - ta.

It is also found in Romania in different variants and names: "Poarta" ("Gate"), "Vama-Catarama"," Halea-Malea", "Ora, ora morilor". (Evseev,1994, p.192) This is a widespread and popular game in a broader folkloric area, as evidenced in numerous literature sources. (Medan,1980; Comișel,1982; Markov Jorgovan, 2010) The aforementioned variants of children's games in the form of gate, bridge or passage, recorded under the name "Podu-l (de piatră) " ("Stone bridge") in Romania, are in fact present in all European peoples, as well as in Canada, Israel (Comișel, 1982, p.12-13), and wider. In Norway, this popular game can be found under the name "Bro, bro, brille" ("Bridge, bridge, glasses"), while in England it is known as "London Bridge is falling down". Eugenia Cernea assumes that the cultural source of this game's scenario is to be sought exactly in the text of the English game "London Bridge is falling down". *(Evseev,1994,* p.192)

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[9] "The game is perfomed in the following way: two children raise their hands and form a bridge. The others pass under their arms, i.e. the bridge. When the song is over, those from the 'bridge' catch those passing under the 'bridge', i.e. under their arms. The caught child stands behind one of the kids 'of the bridge' and the game continues" Mirboj Eugenia Mg-dipl 1/53.

PODU-L DE PIATRĂ

Comparing this game in a broader geographic area, there are surprisingly great similarities among the recorded variants. Besides, Emilia Comişel noticed that "not only the way of performing this game is almost identical, but its poetic text is also very similar, as well as the names of two players who stand for 'bridge' pillars (in Romania they are named after fruits, in England too, while in France they are named after two household objects, which is also the case in some particular variants in Romania, though with a preference for names of objects made of gems, gold, silver and similar)." (Comişel,1982, p.12-13) Furthermore, in his extensive study of traditional children's games, Ivan Evseev confirms similarities in the ways these games are performed among many European peoples, stating that: "Bulgarian, Hungarian, Polish, Czechoslovak, English, etc. variants are missing the 'pull' of children (players) across a line. In the text or dramatic scenario, there is a motif of sacrifice in order to cross or mend the bridge. The victim here is the last child in the game. In Czechoslovak variant, this ritual is symbolised with a light hit in the head or 'boiling in a cauldron', which are figuratively represented by hands as lowering bridge pillars, just as this game is played in Danish variant. At the same time, foreign versions of this game hold resemblance with the Romanian version of the game called "Poarta" ("Gate"), "Halea-Malea" or "Ora, ora morilor". There can be a relation between the character from the children's game and a historical character, though there is no direct relation between folklore and history, but a rather mythological one. Both names, the historical and the one from the game, seem to have a common mythological-folkloric source."(Evseev,1994) Evseev considers the game "Poarta" ("Bridge") in Romanian folklore to represent the theme of sacrifice and that "unfortunately, mythological-symbolic approach that this game has was under a great pressure of interpretation which stems from mythology and archetypes of Romanian literature." According to claims

of Romanian researcher Călinescu (Călinescu,1982, p.58-60), "the idea of integrating the meaning of this game with one of the four fundamental myths of Romanian literature", which G. Călinescu talked about, "was too easily adopted". It is considered that this game represents survival in children's folklore, victims of 'building in', and that this theme was taken from the ballade *Meșterul Manole* (Brickworker Manole). Yet, as he further concludes, "verse metrics which consists of 9 syllables and the modal structure of the melody that follows this game are not specific to Romanian folklore." (Evseev,1994, p.192 according to Călinescu,1982, p.58-60)

One of the children's games in the form of gate, which has been recorded during this research, is "Laste, prolaz'te" ("Swallows, fly by") (ex.156).

156

LASTE PROLAZ'TE

Teodora Uroșev, 10 ani,
Filip Uroșev, 8 ani,
David Uroșev, 5 ani,
Doloave, 13.01.2012

(cca ♩=112)

La - ste___ pro- laz'- te, kroz go- ru nam do- la- zt'e.

Na- ša go- ra u- ve- la, a va- ša je ze- le- na.

It is about games that are performed in a very similar way as the above mentioned Romanian ones, with a difference that the game „Prolazite, prolazite"[10] ends with children pulling their arms to measure the strength of the two opposed groups. The stated examples in Serbian language represent the same variant of the children's game that was recorded functionally. Numerous research in ethnology, ethno-choreology and ethno-musicology, as well as information from Serbian literature. (Janković,Lj.& D., 1949; Đorđević, 1958; Vasić, 1991; Marjanović, 2005, Janković,Lj.& D., 1949) evidence the popularity of games with elements of pulling among girls. This type of game represents young women's congregative game, known in Kosovo as "Kroš krošnjice". (Vasić 1991,p. 207) In the work of Dragutin M. Đorđević, there is a variant

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[10] "Two children agree on their roles. For example, one will be an "apple" and the other a "pear". They stand facing one another, with hands above their heads, and hold each other's hands. All other children who participate in the game sing and pass under their arms. When the song ends, the two children lower their hands and catch one of the others. They ask him or her, so that the others cannot hear, whether he or she would be the "apple" or the "pear". Depending on which one the child chooses, it stands behind the child that represents the fruit of the choice. The caught child, as it now knows who bears which role, must not reveal the secret, and it keeps standing behind the child it chose. The game continues until all other children are divided into the two groups (behind the "apple" or the "pear" child). Then, the two groups pull the hands, in the way that the two children who started the game stay standing facing one another, and hold each other's hand. The others, who are standing behind them, embrace each other around the waist, forming a chain. Beforehand, they draw a line on the ground as a mark, and once they are lined up, the pulling can begin. The winner is the group that pulls the opponents on its side of the line, i.e. across the line". (Bojan Jovanović, KT 8/b31. Planjanin, Kristina, in: "Serbian and Romanian children's songs in the light of comparative studies" (original title: "Srpske i rumunske dečije pesme u svetlu komparativnih istraživanja"), scientific essay, Library of Art Academy, Novi Sad, 2000; manuscript)

named "Širte, porte" ("Open the doors") (Đorđević, 1958), while among Hungarian group in Čantavir in 1920's it was recorded that children played "Kapije" ("Gates") or "Buj, buj, zelena grano", which are performed in the same way as the previously mentioned games. (Juhász, 1996) "Hungarian ethnologists classify the game "Buj, buj, zelena grano" into carnival games, which were performed from the moment of entering the Easter fast, but which already in last century passed into the domain of children's games. In these games, "the text that children say during the game contains symbolic words about a fruitful cherry tree, greening, vegetation, swallows that come in springtime, which indicates the rituals of passing for fertility, renewal of agrarian cycle, renewal of life." (Marjanović, 2005, p.152)

It is interesting that the same example in Hungarian language was recorded in Novi Bečej in 2015.

BÚJJ, BÚJJ, ZŐLD ÁG

Eržebet Kicošev, 52 god.
Novi Bečej, 03.05.2015
snimila Sanja Kicošev

cca ♩=88

BÚJJ, BÚJJ ZÖLD ÁG, ZÖLD LE - VE- LECS - KE
NYI-TVA VAN AZ A-RANY-KA-PU CSAK BÚJ- JA-TOK RAJ - TA!
RAJ - TA, RAJ - TA LE -SZA-KADT A PAJ - TA,
BENN-MA-RADT A MACS - KA.

A free translation of lyrics would be:

"Bend, bend,

Under green branch,

Green leaf,

Golden gate is open,

Pass under it

Now, now, garner is down,

Cat stayed inside."

In contemporary literature we also find a verification that this game in Hungarian language under the name "Bújj, bújj, zöld ág" is still "today present in playing practice of children in Novi Sad." (Jakovljević-Šević, 2011, p. 57)

It is known that people pass under a shroud, icon or gown, for their health, purification and rebirth. These facts are also confirmed by Croatian ethnochoreologists, like Ivan Ivančan, i.e. that wedding ceremonies in Međimurje contain "passing under risen sabres, which equally symbolises the eviction of evil forces and birth of a new life." (Ivančan, 1987, p. 14 according to Matasović, 1936) He further states: "Flagmen sometimes waved with the sabres [...] Kapoli (the name of flagmen in Međimurje) with white gloves and sabres lead the wedding procession, dancing and waving with sabres." (Ivančan 1987, p. 14 according to Matasović, 1936)

An example of a song following a game, under the name "Laste prolaze" ("Swallows fly") was also recorded in 2015[11] in the municipality of Brod, which lies in the north of Republika Srpska and Bosnia and Hercegovina, on the border with Croatia.

In the mentioned variants of children's games, the children/adolescents change their names and choose new ones (after gems, fruits, flowers, birds, etc.) in the moment when they change their whole beings, i.e. in the period of puberty, living through their physical and emotional changes as well as new intimate needs. On that path of transformation, of growing up from an adolescent to an adult, those children symbolically pass through the gate/bridge in this game. The gate, in fact, represents a certain change through: beginning or end of a new season, entering a new agrarian year, a life (through birth), or leaving a life (through death), as numerous authors noted. (Markov Jorgovan, 2010, p.132) According to ethnologist Vesna Marjanović, this game is also "found in works of art, for example, a 17th centrury engraving by painter Gerard, which portrays young women with crossed arms, high above their heads. (Arijes , 1989, p. 116) The rituals of passing are also present in ancient rites. (Marjanović, 2005, p. 152) From these examples, it can be concluded that the symbolic meaning of games with passing is much older than what we record in our traditional culture." (Marjanović , 2005, p. 152) In their research on the

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[11] The sample was recorded by Tatjana Marić, student of Pre-school Teacher Training College, Kikinda, Republic of Serbia

origins and age of the motif of bridge, some scientists link this motif with the primitive, Paleolithic man (Kulišić, Š.,Petrović,Ž.P., Pantelić, N., 1998, p. 248-249) whose conscience about the bridge as a stimulative factor was actually his "fascination with a heavenly phenomenon, a 'bridge-miracle'", i.e. the rainbow, and according to whose worldview, "supernatural beings walk on this colourful vault. This miraculous arch connects two worlds, and passing under this heavenly bridge – vault or arch – has a magical effect." (Shevalijer,J.& Cheerbrandt,A., 1989) This is yet one out of many interpretations of this ancient game. According to interpretations by Romanian researcher Evseev, who, in his extensive study on children's games, brings about a conclusion in connection with the mentioned game: "in archetypal game of 'bridge', there is in fact a dramatisation of the ancient custom of human sacrifice (which was replaced with giving of food in Romanian variant), that is, offering gifts to gods of nature, who will in turn free the waters of the Spring." (Evseev, 1994, p. 195)

In ethnochoreological terms, observing this figure, different passings and superstitions connected with it indicate that among our people such a ritual had a great significance in earlier times. Those passings were performed not only as a sign of a re-birth and renewal of life, but also as a "prophylaxis, a means of healing, for good health and purification from conjurations." (Janković, Lj. & D., 1957, p. 7-8) Besides, according to Tihomir Đorđević, it is not to exclude that the figures of ritual passings in games can be interpreted in a similar way. (Đorđević, 1940, p. 3-18) Passing in the ritual games, as it has been stated already, can also be done under sabres, shawls, raised hands, such as in games "Kroš" and "Krošnjice" in Kosovo (Serbia); "Kolo Bokeljske mornarice" in Kotor (Montenegro); "Kumpanija" in Korčula (Croatia); "Kalinčice" in Kičevo and surroundings (FYR Macedonia), "Kroz vlakale" in Ninčićevo (Serbia); "Črnomeljsko kolo – most" and "Metlišski most" in Bela Krajina (Slovenia). Considering the fact that the same forms and figures can be found also today in folk games that are not related to any particular occasions, the mentioned forms and figures are not a part of crucial conditionsfor perfomance of rituals with "kolo" dance. Moreover, beside other conditions, as sisters Janković claim, the stated elements play an important role when determining whether a game has a ritual origin or not. (Janković Lj. i D. , 1957, p. 7-8)

Concerning more recent interpretations by contemporary ethnochoreologists, as for instance Olivera Vasić, "shaping of the space around the main ritual act is a highly important element of rites, and it is done through the form of the game".

The most widespread form of the game is a circle or a semicircle, by means of which a "boundary line" is created between the main action of the ritual and the observers. In the performance of the ritual and ritual games, not all the community participates, but the elected representatives, while the form of the game is the easiest way to set this clear boundary. (Vasić, 2004, p.114-115) According to Vasić, another form of

the game that appears in the ritual games is actually "the gate of kolo (circle dance)" or "the door of kolo", which is characteristic of all rituals and games in which the status of the individual changes (e.g. 'proigravanje' (first public dance) of girls, kidnapping of girls) or the state of the individual changes. These games are dedicated to the ancestors (it is believed that after a year from the death of an individual, he or she goes into the world of their ancestors and only then does this form of game appear). As the third form of the game, according to Vasić's statements, "while forming a special ritual place, there is the previously mentioned tunnel made either from raised arms or from crossed swords which appear in games of initiations of girls and boys." (Vasić, 2004, p. 114-115)

Olivera Vasić, an ethnologist and ethnocoreologist, included the mentioned game „Laste prolaz'te" ("Swallows, fly by") in the remains of the ritual inheritance from the convocations and fairs that were held during the Easter (Slavic) Carnival. In her extensive ethnocoreological study (Vasić, 1991, p. 203), regarding the rituals of the passage, she states: "Speaking of the games for kidnapping girls, [...] they merged in Podrinje with the games from girls' fairs, with the games of 'proigravanje' (first public dance). 'Proigravanje' was known in the games from Kosovo, Vojvodina and the surroundings of Belgrade. Games related to kidnapping of girls were known in Hercegovina, Bosnia and Southwestern Serbia. In the games of the Serbian part of Podrinje, "Oj javore, javore", "Povr' gore" and „Laste prolaz'te" ("Swallows, fly by"), the influences of the three areas were combined: Dinaric, Moravian and Pannonian. It is not possible to define accurately when that happened. The mentioned games began to disappear in the first decades of the twentieth century, being performed only by boys and girls, in the middle of the twentieth century only by young girls, whereas today they are unknown. We should be reminded of the fact that in Podrinje, kidnapping is a normal way of getting married, just as the wedding ceremony is. In the autumn period, the famous fairs used to be held, where girls were "stolen" (kidnapped). The fair was not regarded as a success if at least two or three girls were not stolen." (Vasić, 1991, p.203) Other researchers recorded variants of these games, called: "Kolariću, pan
iću", "Kaloper-Pero, Jelo" (Jorgović, 1894, p. 28-30), "Pleten tanac" (Jorgović, 1894, p.33-34) and "Oj Stevane, bane". (Jagerović & Terzin, 1921, p.28-30) An example of a similar name to the Serbian one was recorded as part of this study under the name: „Estebane, bane" (ex.155) during the fieldwork in Kuštilj in 2002, where the text from the first verse "Oj Stevane, bane" was varied into "Estebane, bane"[12].

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[12] The description of the game: Two children hold each other's hands, they stand one against the other, twist their fingers and put their hands up. The other children sing the song and pass under their hands. At the end of the song, they lower their arms and grab one of the children. Then one of these two children whispers on his or her ear so that the others do not hear: "I am the mountain made of gold ", and the other one whispers: "I am a two storey house full of chocolade and candies, do you want to come with me?" Then the child decides which one to stand behind. The game starts all over again and ends with the next child being captured and deciding who he or she will stand behind. In the end, when the children are aligned into two opposing camps, they compete who is stronger by pulling their hands." Mg- dipl.1/88

155

ESTEBANE, BANE

Livia Pitic, 39 de ani,
Coştei, 14.11.2002

(cca ♩=108)

Es- te– ba- ne, ba - ne, ot- vo - ri mi vra - ta, etc...

The melo-rhytmical patterns of the aforementiomed variants of this popular children's game range from 3 (ex.155) to 8 sections (ex.153,156). The rhytmical structure is binary in almost all analysed examples. All of the analysed examples are subject to the children's rhythmical system. The verses follow each other. They are composed of 3 up to 9 syllables.

In addition to verses with an even number of syllables (from 4, 6, 8), there are also verses with an odd number of syllables (from 3, 5, 7 and 9).

The two most common types of versification are: the hexa- and octosyllable.

It is only in one example that the versification is constant (ex.152). In the aforementioned examples, we encounter a number of combinations of two or more types of versification without any pre-established rule. The way of performing these games is singing or singing in combination with scanned verses. (ex.153,156).

The melodic line is simple and syllabic. It takes place at adjacent tones with certain rises, mostly of the small third of descending or ascending direction (ex.152, 154, 155), as well as in the examples of "Bújj, bújj, zöld ág" in Hungarian or in the example recorded in Brod in Bosanska Posavina, where also a rise of large fourth of ascending direction can be noted.

The melodic curve usually encompasses a fourth, less frequently a fifth or a large sixth.

The tonal relationships of these choruses are usually established within an infrapentonal diatonical archaic oligochordy: tritone (ex.153,155,156), i.e. tritone with some tones of uncertain height, and less frequently within tetrachord, pentachord and sixth chord.

There are two common melo-rhytmical motifs:

By combining these melo-rhythmical motifs, by their variation and by certain expansion with cadences in some of the examples, more variants arise.

The musical form is composed of:

a) One melodic verse repeated twice AA (ex.155) or more times AAA (ex.153), AAAA (ex.156) with slight modifications AAAv, as in the example "Laste prolaze", recorded in Brod in Bosanska Posavina,

b) Examples containing two, three or four different melodic sections, the first of which can be repeated several times: AABBv (e.g.152), A A1B C A A1B1 (ex. "Bújj, bújj, zöld ág" in Hungarian), A A B/A A C D (ex.154).

The melodic verses of the analysed songs cadence mostly on the first and third level, and rarely on the second level as well.

All of the above presented musical examples testify that this game is part of a very live and contemporary repertoire of children, not only in the region of Vojvodina, but also in a wider folkloric area.

Discussion

In this game, the bridge, the gate and being captured in the gate actually represent the path of emotional and physical maturation of children. In adolescence, they are actually "caught" or caught up with new emotions, new emotional "state" of falling in love, but also in their new, altered bodies. Just like in real life, they need to choose or decide on "a pear" or "an apple", "silver" or "gold", and that the other actors, i.e. the children who play, do not know what they have decided. Similarly, this game is also described and interpreted by Virgil Medan. (Medan, 1980, p.47) The very children-adolescents, when they decide to "cross" to the other side of the "bridge", they actually pass from the safe, familiar, infantile world into the adult world. That moment of the decision, when they are caught up in their new, changed bodies of adolescents with new, unknown and intense emotions for them, is actually a moment when they question themselves whether they are still children or it is time for them to turn into the world of adults, so symbolically and figuratively in the form of a game, they move to the other side of the „rainbow". On that "journey to adulthood", the physical, emotional and intimate transformations, they discover a new sense

of being in their own new bodies, they are being "tickled by butterflies" (as when in love)[13] and new "needs" are about to be discovered, such as their own sexuality as well as its purpose - extension of the species. That is why ethnologists like Olivera Vasić and Vesna Marjanović put them into the category of the games of the passage, i.e. the group of "songs following the games of initiation" (in Romanian "cântece de jocurii inițiatice"), according to Virgil Medan. (Medan, 1980, p.47) This path of growing up, from a child through adolescent to a mature man, is in fact determined by the genetic code. This type of game of transition from one state to another, in the form of a bridge within the described game, symbolically represents a universal state that each of us as an individual has to pass on the journey of growing up and maturing, regardless of the lyrics, the melody of the mentioned game, ethnicity or the language in which this game takes place. Given the children's preference for imitation of adults, known to all nations, some authors rightfully believe that children are "the best guardians of folk tradition. The universality of children's expression is the consequence of the same psychophysical properties at a given age, which condition the simplicity and unaltered inheritance that older children pass on to the younger ones through pure, undefiled forms". (Ilijin, 1970, p. 419-420)

Conclusions

Children's folklore is a living category, which, just like the man, survives despite the various influences that shape, change and modernise them on a daily basis. It influences the development of creativity, imagination and the intellect of a future man. From all of the aforementioned, we consider that this popular game that we encounter in such a wide folkloric area, in many nations in the world actually symbolically represents an evolutionary path, that is, the journey through the stages of maturation of each of us, as a human being: from a child, through adolescent to a mature person. Therefore, we share the view that on the journey of growing up, the interests of children around the world clearly prove that people from the most diverse parts of the world are facing the same difficulties in attempt to give an answer to the same questions, and that they are trying to adapt to their surroundings in similar ways, through very similar cultural modalities. (Evseev, 1994 p. 46)

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[13] „Butterflies in the stomach", the scientists actually interpret as a rapid flow of blood, from the head, through the stomach to the genitals.

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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CONTEMPORARY CURRICULUM

Edita Rogulj

Abstract

An organized stay in a natural environment ensures the occurrence of experience-based learning for children of all ages. In a natural environment, children can develop self-confidence, communication and social skills, and they are encouraged for research activities. By observing nature, children develop awareness of natural processes and acquire knowledge for sustainable development that helps raise environmental awareness as an important element of a healthy growing up. Nature provides children with plenty of research topics, such as the weather, plant and animal life, natural cycle, and exploration of natural materials and landscapes. By the sole act of exploring nature, children are inspired for various forms of creative expression, such as motor, speech, music, and visual creativity. In the research process, it is not the final product that is the priority, but the sole process which happens in the interaction between the nature and children. This defines a need for an interdisciplinary approach to the development of programs aimed at the children's return to nature. That way, children can have new experiences which they will implement in their daily lives. An organized and planned approach to this issue facilitates a better integration of children into nature and expansion of their cognitive world in a wider context that goes beyond the framework of its microsystem. Programs such as Outdoor Curriculum, Forest School, Forest Kindergarten and Children in Nature are those pedagogical approaches that allow children to connect with nature. This paper gives an overview of the main features of the abovementioned programs in Denmark, England, and Croatia.

Introduction

The urban way of life directs children towards staying indoors. Children play in front of the building, on the street or in a nearby park more and more rarely. Moss (2012) emphasizes that the area for children to play freely without the supervision of adults has been reduced by 90% since the 1970s. Spatial changes, both in urban and rural environments, greatly affect the segment of the children's outdoor free play. The space for the play is being reduced, and the number of roads is increasing, affecting the emergence of the culture of fear, which leads to the reduction of the child's autonomy for free movement and play (Furedi, 2002). Global changes are as powerful as those within the micro system and are intertwined (Small & Supple, 2001). The busy life of parents determines today's childhood, which is becoming increasingly institutionalized. Children's stay in various educational institutions can be linked to the growing academic demands children are faced with (Waite & Pratt, 2011). The educational policy of many countries connects the process of education with spending time indoors, thus contributing to the reduction of opportunities for children to spend time outdoors, and therefore to the loss of connection with nature (Waller & Davis, 2014). This is exactly why the Forest School concept plays a major role in helping children to return to nature.

The development of an alternative pedagogy called the Forest School has a long history. In 1950, in Denmark, Ella Flatau founded the first kindergarten where climbing a mountain was a part of the institution curriculum (Williams-Siegfredsen, 2017). Throughout the history, there have been various reflections on the concept of learning and playing outdoors around the globe. Many countries have implemented a segment that involves spending time in nature into their curriculum, as a part of education policy (Willer et al., 2017).

This paper brings an overview of the Outdoor Curriculum in Denmark, the Forest School in England, and the "Children in Nature" program in Zagreb. The abovementioned pedagogical approaches will be analyzed separately for a better understanding of the overall concept of the Forest Kindergartens. The obtained data will be compared to the "Children in Nature" program in order to get a clearer picture of the opportunities this program provides. The main element of the research is the child of today, or the contemporary picture of the child. According to Bašić (2011), the features of the *new* pedagogical image of the child represent an individual thinking strategy, the development of a personal theory, solving problems in a unique way, and the development of multiple competences through research of their physical and social environment. The child is an active subject of his/her own development with a great potential for self-education through sensory experiences. It is therefore necessary for the adults to enable children to freely develop their own image of the world and themselves through social interactions in a socio-cultural environment. The process of building one's self is a complicated process that is subject to the influence of various elements from the child's macro, micro, and meta environment. Industrialization

and globalization bring changes to social relationships, ways of communication and general socio-cultural development.

This is exactly why the positive influence of nature has a special significance for the overall development of a child. Spending time outdoors, in an organized or self-organized form, a child can create a new image of himself/herself in a stimulating natural environment. Spending time in nature allows children to explore, develop cognitive skills, creativity, and motor skills, encouraging self-organizing activities and socio-emotional development. The process of growing up in collaboration with nature occurs through the children's key activity, which is play.

The concept of organized stay in nature

In the countries of Northern Europe; Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, children's stay outdoors, especially in nature, is considered a part of quality childhood and is implemented into the preschool curriculum (Nor∂dahl & Jôhannesson, 2015; Ärlemalm-Hagsér & Sandberg, 2013; Einarsdóttir & Wagner, 2006). The impact and quality of this approach has been recognized around the world, so, following the example of northern countries, new kindergartens are being open around the world. Many studies in Australia, New Zealand, Europe, the United States of America, and Asia confirm that nature has a positive influence on the overall well-being, academic success, overall achievements and environmental awareness of children (Waller, 2017). The research results provide an overview of the differences between countries, conditioned by the socio-economic status, as well as other demographic differences and the gender and age of children (Brussoni et al. 2015; Askwith, 2014; Hill & Brown, 2014; Mawson, 2014; Bragg, 2013).

The characteristics of the *outdoor* context include less control from adults, children's freedom in learning about their environment and expending children's competences in all areas through play and research (Waite et al., 2013). Nature is changeable and brings new challenges that encourage children to think and seek solutions. In that process, team work stands out, with the aim of facilitating the handling of new situations with an emphasis on the importance of the role of the preschool teacher and their work. Mawson (2014) emphasizes the importance of the (non)interfering educational approach to the child's play that ensures a child directly accesses the problem, providing specific knowledge of the natural world that surrounds him/her. Natural materials such as water, sand, stone, and wood encourage the child to creatively manipulate the materials, unlike structured materials that provide limiting opportunities. Playing with natural materials in a natural environment, children are more prone to developing imagination, creativity, problem-solving skills by manipulation, modification, and transformation of the materials from nature (Bilton, 2010).

Danish *Outdoor* Curriculum

Danish tradition is marked by a life in nature that integrates the traditional and contemporary developments. The development potential is based on social and geographic possibilities with a particular emphasis on education. The culture of life is building its development foundations on health and leisure as well as education, and this they call *friluftsli,* which in free translation means *fresh air.* The philosophy of such lifestyle is reflected in the development of educational programs, or the development of specific curricula such as the *Outdoor* Curriculum. Williams-Siegfredsen (2017) gives an overview of the *Outdoor* Curriculum development in this area through three phases. The first phase marks the beginning of the year 1700, when the opinion on stays in nature with the elements of survival changes drastically, to the privilege of having the possibility to spend time outside. A leisure culture is developed, including various activities, from walks to horse riding. With industrialization, begins the second phase at the beginning of 1800, when more and more people start living in urban areas, with an increasing number of working hours, which greatly reduces the possibilities of spending time outdoors. As awareness of the importance and positive impact of nature and spending time outdoors grows, more and more factory owners start organizing activities for their workers with the aim of reducing stress and enhancing their general health. During that period, a kindergarten for the workers' children is opened so as to provide them with a healthy and stimulating environment, important for the child's cognitive development. The last, third phase, is marked by the expanding of such way of thinking, and in 1970, awareness of the need for coexistence with nature is developed. The importance of spending time outdoors for health reasons is no longer questionable. Encouraging such lifestyle stems from state laws that advocate *green living.*

The Danish pedagogical theoretical framework is based on the approaches of authors such as: Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Frobel, Dewey, Montessori, Piaget, Vigotski, Golman, Gardner, and Csikszentmihalyi.

The theoretical framework of the *Outdoor* Curriculum in Denmark is based on Rousseau's pedagogy that deliberates over the importance of the natural environment and experiential learning in nature (Wu, 1979). Childhood, as the most important period of character and knowledge development was recognized by Froebel (Sigsgaard, 1978), which is coopted in the development of this particular approach. The need for the development of natural intelligence in the *Outdoor* Curriculum has been taken over from Gardner and his multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1993). Natural intelligence enables children to identify and categorize so as to be able to further track and develop their knowledge, as well as their natural intelligence. Natural intelligence can only be developed in nature and outdoors. Dewey believes that children learn by acting and that spending time outdoors is particularly stimulating in the process of learning (Mooney, 2000). Hence, we are reaching the importance of the Outdoor Curriculum in the learning process, which, apart from that intrinsically motivated learning, puts a great emphasis on the externally conditioned learning process. Piaget bases his theory on the freedom of choice when children have to have plenty of time for

a free play with the possibility of self-organizing activities (Monney, 2000). According to Vygotsky (1978), social and cognitive development complement each other. The segment of the child's independence and interaction with adults, or the development of his/her social intelligence through social contacts is also emphasized. Goleman (2006) mentions social games as a medium for the development of good feelings and satisfaction that trigger the excretion of hormones into the brain which has the effect of activating the overall development of a child. Csikszentmihaly theory is supported by Danish practitioners, and is based on the development of creativity and the development of the overall human potential (Csikszentmihaly, 2002).

Despite the long history and development of the *Outdoor* Curriculum, it was not until 2004 that the Danish curriculum with the elements of the *Forest School* was legally regulated (Williams-Siegfredsen, 2007). The term *Forest School* was created to describe the Danish practice with children of early age which uses spending time in nature as one of the segments of preschool education. The system includes children at 3 years of age who spent 1/3 of their time in the educational system. Williams-Siegfredsen (2017) gives an overview of the Danish institutional education system, which offers four programs: day nursery for children aged 26 weeks to 3 years, kindergarten for children aged 3 to 6 years, an integrated program for children aged 12 weeks to 6 years and nannies for children aged 12 weeks to 3 years.

According to the Danish law, pedagogy of early education should promote the well-being of children, health, and learning. It supports individual development and self-confidence, encourages the development of children's competences, pays attention to children's rights and responsibilities, and develops democracy, children's independence, and makes children capable of entering the community (Williams-Siegfredsen, 2017). To achieve these legal regulations, it is necessary to have a quality staff capable of responding to all challenges. The education of the staff undergoes changes in 2001 when the Parliament introduces new qualifications for a professional pedagogue. In 2003, the evaluation of the program is being carried out, introducing centralization of the educational system at 8 faculties. Pedagogical program changes in 2007 when students of pedagogy are opting for specialization in three areas: children and young adults, people with special needs, and people with social problems. The program goes through major changes in 2014, when the education puts focus on competences. In the second year of study, students are opting for specialization in the areas of child pedagogy (0 to 5 years), school and extracurricular pedagogy, and social and special pedagogy (all ages). The education is organized in modules lasting from 6 to 7 weeks, and includes 7 compulsory subjects and two optional ones that students choose from: creative expression, natural and outdoor life, health and exercise promotion, media and digital culture, cultural projects and cultural events, social events and entrepreneurship, cultural encounters and interculturality. With the theoretical part, the practical part is

also obligatory, lasting 2 times 6 months as a part of the project they have independently chosen. It intends to strengthen pedagogic competences, strengthen interdisciplinarity and flexibility at work. For pedagogues working in Forest Schools, special education is organized. The emphasis is primarily on understanding yourself, your strengths and fears, and finding pedagogic ways to solve them. The process of education includes various mental and physical activities. The work of a pedagogue (or preschool teacher) in the nature requires the skills of good planning and observation. The pedagogue as a model supports children's social and emotional development through their interaction with the children. The basis of the Danish curriculum is to provide a safe and stimulating environment for the children. These tasks and roles are questioned through practice with children, but also parents in the segment of partnership development. The values of the Forest School are visible in the general development of children, including mental, cognitive and language skills, socio-emotional competences, and the most important element, health. Research shows that children who spend time outdoors or in nature have better developed social and language skills, are quicker in adopting new knowledge and develop practical intelligence, and have a strong immune system, or a smaller number of infections. More serious injuries are rare in the Forest Schools, while scratches are sanctioned straight away or immediately after coming back to the kindergarten. The head pedagogue is responsible for the organization and safety of children. Great importance is attached to the development of collaborative partnerships with parents. Apart from the daily communication, kindergartens organize *working weekend days* when pedagogues and parents participate in joint activities. The reason for enrollment of children in Forest Kindergartens is the parents' concern about the increasing influence of the virtual world and the impact of urban life. Children live in a protected environment without challenges and risks which are considered to be the primary element of the Forest Kindergarten. The risk and challenges are an important medium for growth and individual development, affecting self-esteem and strengthening of confidence and learning how to deal with everyday problems (Sandseter, 2010; Adams, 2001). Another thing that is being developed is empathy and care for peers and other living beings, such as animals that live around them. Trust and authority are being built, because in the Forest Kindergarten there are no fences, but agreements are respected. The Danish *Outdoor* has a long experience and tradition which is recognized and often taken over in the countries around the world.

Forest School in England

In England, the Education Reform Act dates back to 1988 and represents the National Curriculum, which encompasses children aged 5 to 16. The curriculum for early education was accepted in 2008. Since the

curriculum is more focused on keeping children indoors, it is not surprising that there is a concern about the possible negative impact the curriculum might have on younger children. This is why the appearance of the Forest School is not surprising, and neither is its spreading across England, Wales, and Scotland. The changes take place under the auspices of education within the Forest School. The beginning is linked to the Bridgewater College in Somerset which, in 1990, sends students to Denmark, where they monitor the elements of the risky play and weather conditions in the *Outdoor* Kindergartens. Upon returning to England, based on the experiential learning, an approach called the Forest School begins to develop. The term has been retained to this day. A recent study conducted by the English government, involving 125 schools, 40,000 students, and 2,000 teachers, confirms the positive effects that spending time outdoors has on the learning process and generally children, teachers, and schools (O'Brien & Murray, 2007). The Forest School is becoming an integral part of almost every kindergarten in the English area.

During the making of the theoretical framework of the Forest School, the pedagogies of Froebel and Pestalozzi were used, as they put an emphasis on the importance of child's play in the overall child development (Pugh, 1996). Education of preschool teachers includes theoretical assumptions of Steiner's holistic approach to interpreting the child's play based on the curriculum that originated according to Piaget, Bruner, and Vigotsky. The Forest School also represents the elements of Montessori pedagogy (Knight, 2013). The sisters MacMillan and Susan Isaacs have developed the awareness of the importance of spending time outdoors, in order to prevent the negative consequences on child development. The Forest School has developed under the auspices of the Forestry Commission, which is under the umbrella of the Forest Education (Murray & O'Brien, 2005). Susannah Podmore gathered the practitioners of the Forest School and together they developed the approach and organized education for preschool teachers (Knight, 2013). An active participant in the development of the Forest School is the University of England which, in its educational programs, includes the models of the Forest School and Outdoor Curriculum. The program is based on the pedagogy of observation which is implemented in activities between children and practitioners, and this structure clearly demonstrates the learning process. Woodall emphasizes that understanding the importance of emotional intelligence is an important segment in the building of the Forest Kindergarten, and conducts a pilot research to determine the positive effects on children's behavior by increasing the level of responsibility and autonomy (Knight, 2013). The development of emotional intelligence becomes a component of education programs for preschool teachers, which is then upgraded through new aspects and values. The Open College Network (OCN) specializes in education outside the standard education process (Knight, 2013). The education of preschool teachers is based on 3 levels which cover practical knowledge and skills based on health and safety and economic impact assessment. They include learning of theoretical knowledge, the development of emotional intelligence, first aid and risk management. The BTEC Program (Business and Technology Education Council) is based on the

child's play, the child, and the child as the center, and is also a part of the pedagogy portfolio. The Forest Kindergarten has spread across England to Wales and Scotland, under the auspices of the Forest School as the main factor in providing education services to preschool teachers. The Forest School employees have developed educational trainings for the future program leaders themselves. The program is designed to aid physical, social, cognitive, linguistic, and emotional development of each program user. Knight (2013) gives an overview of areas of special development: individual development and improvement, the development of special skills, the acquisition of knowledge and skills they will share with others, and the development of self-esteem and self-respect. In England, children are included in the Forest Kindergarten program at the age of 3 to 5, after which period they go to school. The education system allows children to stay in the Forest School until the age of 11. The quality of the program has been recognized in the wider community, especially by parents, which is exactly why the interest of the family leads to organizing weekend outings for all members.

The "Children in Nature" program in Croatia

In the review of the "Children in Nature" program monograph (2013, p. 46), Edita Slunjski describes the program as "an authentic Croatian concept of direct teaching of preschool children about nature in nature itself, which, at least in this form, has not yet been recorded in the pedagogical practice of other countries, which gives it a special meaning and value."

The kindergarten "Ivana Brlić Mažuranić" is the holder of the "Children in Nature" program, which is being implemented in the City of Youth. The program was created within the Program of Public Needs for the Preschool Education and is verified by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. The basic concept of the program is based on the immediate contact with nature, active research and learning in collaboration with other children and adults. This process provides children with the opportunity to acquire life and practical experiences, expand existing knowledge and skills, develop emotional intelligence focused on the ethical and ecological form of coexisting in the community (Gunc, 2013). Emphasis has been placed on natural learning in an environment that encourages children to develop ecological sensitivity and empathy towards other life forms. Encouragement of the development of practical intelligence has an aim to preserve and enhance coexistence with the nature and building of ecological awareness of the importance of environmental protection (Došen Dobud, 2016). The particularity of the "Children in Nature" program is in the curriculum construction, in which all kindergartens of the City of Zagreb participate, for the period of their stay in the program. The City of Youth offers natural resources that help with the realization of planned activities by each kindergarten, its curriculum and the curriculum of a group. This ensures continuation of the realization of the Plan and program which was started in the

parent kindergarten and is continued as a part of the project "Children in Nature". This way, children can review their previous theoretical knowledge directly in nature, and, upon their return to the kindergarten, carry out an evaluation and make conclusions.

The users of the "Children in Nature" program are preschool children, or those attending kindergartens, in their last year before going to school. The time children spend outdoors is solely based on the joint decision of children and parents. The program includes a five-day stay in the City of Youth, from Monday to Friday, 24/7. During that time, children are accommodated together with their teachers in specially equipped houses whose interior is reminiscent of family homes. Preschool teachers who stay with children in the City of Youth do not get further education for this form of work. A week before preschool teachers join the program, the City of Youth heads organize a two-hour meeting at which preschool teachers get directions and guidelines on how to implement the program, while they present their general plan and program for the children's five-day stay in the program.

Conclusion

The benefits of spending time outdoors have long been known, and today's lifestyle potentiates the need to use all of nature's resources even more. The possibilities that nature offers have also been recognized by the education system as well. After reviewing the Outdoor Curriculum, The Forest School, and the "Children in Nature" program, a spectrum of various approaches has been given, with one common link, which is the child's benefit. The stay in nature will enable children to develop new knowledge and skills with the aim of a holistic development. The Outdoor Curriculum and the Forest Kindergarten are organized on the principle of everyday stays in the nature during the whole pedagogical year and includes children from the age of three. The "Children in Nature" program is designed as a day-long stay in nature, during five days, and includes only preschool children. While developing the awareness of the positive impact of nature on the overall child development, it is necessary to think about redefining the "Children in Nature" program for younger children and in this be guided by the developmental characteristics of children.

Experiences of good practice from Denmark and England encourage us to reflect on the benefits and qualities of this form of work and the possibilities of implementing it into our education system. An important element of the program development are definitely educated preschool teachers who enrich their competences in the segment of children's time spent outdoors. This is exactly why it is necessary to consider redefining the formal education of preschool teachers in Croatia. Quality education of preschool teachers is crucial to the development of quality practice which is further developed and improved through practice and additional education.

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GREEK TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ROLE AS A KEY FACTOR IN PRESCHOOLERS' ENGAGEMENT

Maria Sakellariou and Efthimia Tsiara

Abstract

This paper explores teachers' perceptions of their role on student engagement. According to Skinner & Pitzer (2012) Williford, et. al, 2013 & Hamre et al. (in press) three features of teacher-child interactions promote children's engagement. In particular, when teachers provide emotionally and instructively supportive interactions to students within a properly structured classroom, children are more engaged (Aydogan, Farran & Sagsoz, 2015; Curby, Downer & Booren, 2014; Findlay, 2013; Pakarinen, 2011; Sakellariou, 2012; 2005). Nevertheless, what happens when some students show high levels of disengagement, despite teachers' support? Can this disaffection affect teachers' feelings and consequently undermine their relationship with the disengaged students?

While there is a growing international research interest in engagement variables and teachers' role there is a gap in qualitative and quantitative investigation into teachers' perspectives and emotions. Through one to one, semi-structured interviews, we investigate 50 Greek teachers' perceptions and emotions of their role as a key factor on preschoolers' engagement. We also examine whether teachers' emotions affect and are affected by students' engagement levels. The interviews are developed based on Creswell's (2008) interview model, with a mixture of open-ended and close-ended questions.

Based on qualitative and quantitative data analysis, we infer that Greek kindergarten teachers are conscious of their responsibility on motivating each student. They identify that it's difficult to activate disengaged students, but when they foster authentic and caring relations with their student and provide structure and autonomy support, they manage to increase student's engagement level. Greek teachers also admit that classroom engagement affects their emotional state. In particular, when their students are engaged, they are overwhelmed by enthusiasm or experience frustration due to their disaffection. Teachers also identify that students' disaffection challenges them, but doesn't undermine their emotional and instructional support and relations for those who are disengaged.

Key words: semi-structured interviews; virtuous or vicious cycle of student engagement; teachers' emotions and perspectives; teacher support

Introduction

According to a model grounded in self- determination theory, three facets of teacher support: warmth, provision of structure, and autonomy support, all of which have been shown to contribute to students' positive self-perceptions, as well as to classroom engagement (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012; Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Furrer & Skinner, 2003).

Research demonstrates that when teachers foster caring relationships (warmth), provide challenging learning activities with high expectations and clear feedback (optimal structure),and explain the relevance and importance of activities and rules while soliciting input from students and respecting their opinions (autonomy support), can combat the decline in participation and low levels of engagement in classroom (Aydogan et.at, 2015; Curby et. al, 2014; Findlay, 2013; Furrer, & Skinner, 2003; Jacobsen, Eggen & Kauchak,2009; Pakarinen, 2011; Sakellariou, 2012, 2005; Williford, et. al, 2013; Hamre et al. in press). As Skinner and Pitzer claim (2012:27):

"*supportive interactions with teachers contribute to positive self-perceptions, which promote student engagement with interesting and meaningful academic activities—which facilitates learning and the development of competence.*

Not only does the teacher's instructional and emotional support affect students' engagement, but also teachers-students mutual relations (Aydogan, et.al, 2015; Curby et. al, 2014; Curby Rimm-Kaufman, Ponitz, 2009; Findlay, 2013; Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, Oort, 2011*).* Sakellariou, 2005; Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Williford, et. al, 2013). When students indicate high engagement level, things are easy: even though there are only a few studies that have explicitly investigated whether students engagement shapes how teachers subsequently respond to them (e.g. Nurmi, J. & Kiuru, 2015), kindergarteners who were more behaviorally engaged in the classroom tended to develop closer relationships with their teachers over time than did those who were less engaged. Similarly, elementary school students (in grades 3 through 5) with higher behavioral engagement in the fall experienced increases in teacher support over the school year. Teachers experience student engagement positively and as a consequence support the engaged students more. This is *virtuous cycle of engagement*, which makes motivational "rich" students richer and more engaged.

What happens when some students show high levels of disengagement? Teaching becomes very difficult, when some students - despite teachers' support- show low levels of engagement and disaffection.

The motivational model holds that perceptions of the self as unwelcome, incompetent, or pressured in school or unsupportive interpersonal interactions can lead to disaffection—which undermines learning

and achievement (Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2009). Disaffection can result in withdrawal of support or increasing coercion from teacher. Students who are bored, restless, disruptive, and disengaged have negative impacts on teachers (Findlay, 2013; Parson & Taylor, 2011). Teachers can experience low student motivation as an obstacle to their teaching, as a personal insult, or as a signal that they are bad at teaching undercutting teachers' sense of competence or thwarting their autonomy. Any of these interpretations could lead teachers to become more disaffected from the target students, and could produce more withdrawal, even hostility, or coercion. If teacher shows neglection or coercion to already disengaged students, consults to more disaffection having negative impact on them (George & Childs, 2012; Klem & Connell, 2003; Williford et al, 2013). Teachers' reactions to student disaffection reproduce disaffection making motivationally "poor" students poorer and at risk. Skinner and Pitzer (2012) refer to *vicious cycle of disaffection.*

Nevertheless, in case that teachers experience students' disaffection as a handy diagnostic tool signaling times when a student is encountering resistance and needs more support, teacher's reaction would have positive impact on disengaged students (Leflot, Van Lier, Onghena, & Colpin, 2010; Shaukat & Iqbal, 2012). If they could see children' disengagement not as personal shortcomings and supported them, would break the vicious circle of disaffection and foster reengagement.

Our Research Project

Based on the motivational model described above and the international research, we consider it valid to investigate teachers' perceptions and emotions with regards to student engagement. While there is a growing international research interest in engagement variables and teachers' role (e.g Fullarton, 2002; Niemi, 2007; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012), there is a gap in qualitative and quantitative investigation into teachers' perspectives and emotions. Taken into consideration that there are only a few studies that have explicitly investigated whether students' engagement shapes how teachers subsequently respond to them, through our research project we investigate:

- teachers' perceptions of their role as a key factor on preschoolers' engagement.
- Whether teachers' emotions affect and are affected by students' engagement levels.

Data Collection Methods

Semi-structured interviews were selected as the type best suited to this project (Creswell, 2008). Perceptions and feelings about motivation and engagement cannot be directly observed. The interviews can provide a basis for understanding the interviewee's emic constructions' and 'inner perspective' (Creswell, 2008).

The interviews were developed based on Creswell's (2008) interview model with a mixture of open-ended and close-ended questions allowing the researcher more flexibility to fully explore the interviewee's perspective (Fontana and Frey, 2000). The interviews incorporated six types of questions; background, knowledge, experience, opinion, feelings, sensory to gain a rounded perspective (Patton, 1990).

As the mode of inquiry, we used one-on-one interviews (Creswell, 2008 ; Gay et al., 2010) that were been conducted from September 2016 to May 2017. Each interview was lasting about 50'-60 '.

The participants in this research were 45 Kindergarten teachers that work in preschool education units in the prefecture of Ioannina. Most of the participants work as general education teachers (84.1%), 36, 4% of whose serve as head teachers of the school unit and (65.9%) have at least fulfilled more than 10 years working experience. The great majority of the kindergarten teachers (75%) have advanced educational studies/ qualifications, 38,6% of whose owns a PhD or a M.edu. title.

Data analysis process

At our research we conducted qualitative and quantitative data analysis processes. Creswell (2008) describes quantitative research as 'seeking to measure', while qualitative research is best suited for research problems in which the variables are unknown and need exploring. According to Findlay (2013) a qualitative approach encompasses and values multiple perspectives and has suitable facets to access the knowledge embedded in the data.

Although there is no single approach to analyzing qualitative data, there are several guidelines for the process. The most important and agreed upon guideline is that the process is inductive and iterative (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Creswell, 2008; Findlay, 2013; Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2010). The iterative nature is paramount to authenticity.

At our research the data analysis began in the first interview and field notes were taken (in situ). Once the interview was over another step in the analysis process was taken. Post analysis occurred when the data collection had concluded and this incorporated *transcribing and memoing*. We were converting audio recordings into text data, a process which was a time consuming but crucial to memoing and coding (Creswell, 2008). After transcribing, we were reading data over at least several times in order to begin developing a coding scheme, a process known as memoing (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). During this time

initial impressions (memos) were written in the margins of transcriptions, while also searching for recurring themes. Some of the initial impressions weren't useful however others lingered throughout, pointing to new patterns and sources of data (Creswell, 2008).

These two processes in turn led to coding; the final step of data analysis. Coding was being made up of the following three steps; open coding[14], axial coding[15] and selective coding[16] (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010; Basit, 2010; Creswell, 2008 and Punch 2009).

Results

At our research project, some of the objectives we investigate are teachers' perceptions of their role as a key factor on preschoolers' engagement and teachers' emotions affected by students' engagement levels. In this paper we present some open-ended and close-ended questions that have been used in 45 interviews and the corresponding teachers' responses that have been qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed.

- *Open-ended question 83: Which are the factors that affect student engagement?*

Analyzing teachers responses to this open-ended question, we found that 75% of the participants recognize that the teacher's role is of paramount importance for student engagement, while 57% of the participants identify that each student is responsible for being engaged or not. According to the interviewees, responsible for student engagement are also the students' family and the school unit (Graph 1).

	the teacher	student's family	the student himself	the school unit
■ Ναί	75.0	47.7	56.8	38.6

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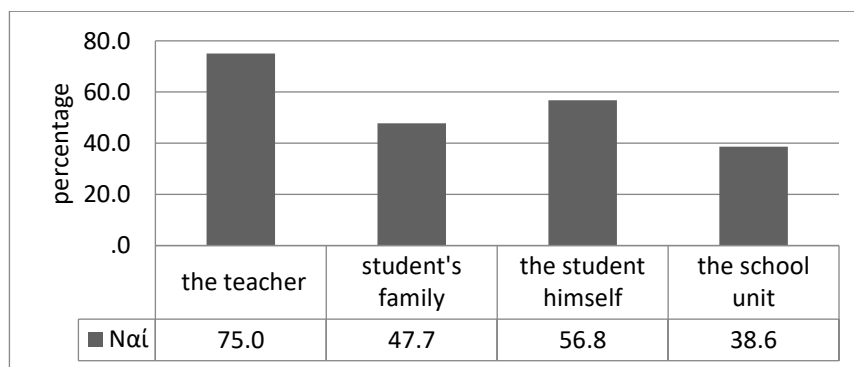
[14] Coding schemes are continually added to, collapsed and refined as the study progresses. The first level of coding is known as open coding. It is used to develop the initial categories and Ary, et al. (2010) suggests this can be achieved by asking what, where, how and why.

[15] After broad categories have been developed from open coding, axial coding aims to reconstruct the data which was broken apart (Ary et al., 2010). The goal of axial coding is to develop main categories and sub-categories.

[16] Finally, the purpose of selective coding is to bring the categories together in an overall theory. Like axial coding, it's concerned with demonstrating links and connections in the categories. Creswell (2008) notes that selective coding is the integration, pulling together and writing of the interrelationships of the categories developed in the axial coding process.

Graph 1: the factors that affect students' engagement

Table 1: Warmth (caring relationships) in relation to student engagement

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I absolutely disagree	1	2,2	2,2	2,2
	I agree	3	6,7	6,7	8,9
	I totally agree	41	91,1	91,1	100,0
	Total	45	100,0	100,0	

- *Close-ended Question 88: When the teacher fosters caring relationships with each student, affects student engagement.*

The great majority of the participants totally agree with this statement (close-ended question No. 88), identifying that when the teacher provides warmth and emotional support to students, affects their engagement decisively (Table 1).

- *Close-ended Question 89: When the teacher fosters autonomy support, affects student engagement.*

The vast majority of the interviewees admit that when the teacher respects students' opinions and gives them the opportunity to take initiatives, enhances classroom engagement. In particular, half of those participants totally agree with this statement (Table 2).

Table 2: Autonomy support in relation to student engagement

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I disagree	1	2,2	2,2	2,2
	I do not even disagree	6	13,3	13,3	15,6
	I agree	15	33,3	33,3	48,9
	I totally agree	23	51,1	51,1	100,0

| | | Total | 45 | 100,0 | 100,0 |

- *Close-ended Question 90: When the teacher fosters optimal structure, affects student engagement.*

The great majority of the participants (approximately 80%) admit that when teachers provide challenging learning activities with high expectations and clear feedback, affect student engagement. In particular, 39 % of those participants totally agree with this statement, while another 11 % disagree further explaining that optimal structure impedes learning flexibility and thus undermines student engagement (Table 3).

Table 3: Optimal structure in relation to student engagement

|		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I absolutely disagree	1	2,2	2,2	2,2
	I disagree	6	13,3	13,3	15,6
	I do not even disagree	8	17,8	17,8	33,3
	I agree	13	28,9	28,9	62,2
	I totally agree	17	37,8	37,8	100,0
	Total	45	100,0	100,0	

- *Open-ended QUESTION 55: What do feel, when your student show high engagement levels*?
  Due to classroom engagement, the interviewees experience various emotions eg. fulfillment, encouragement, happiness, even self- efficacy and responsibility. The vast majority of them are overwhelmed by satisfaction and joy (Graph 2).
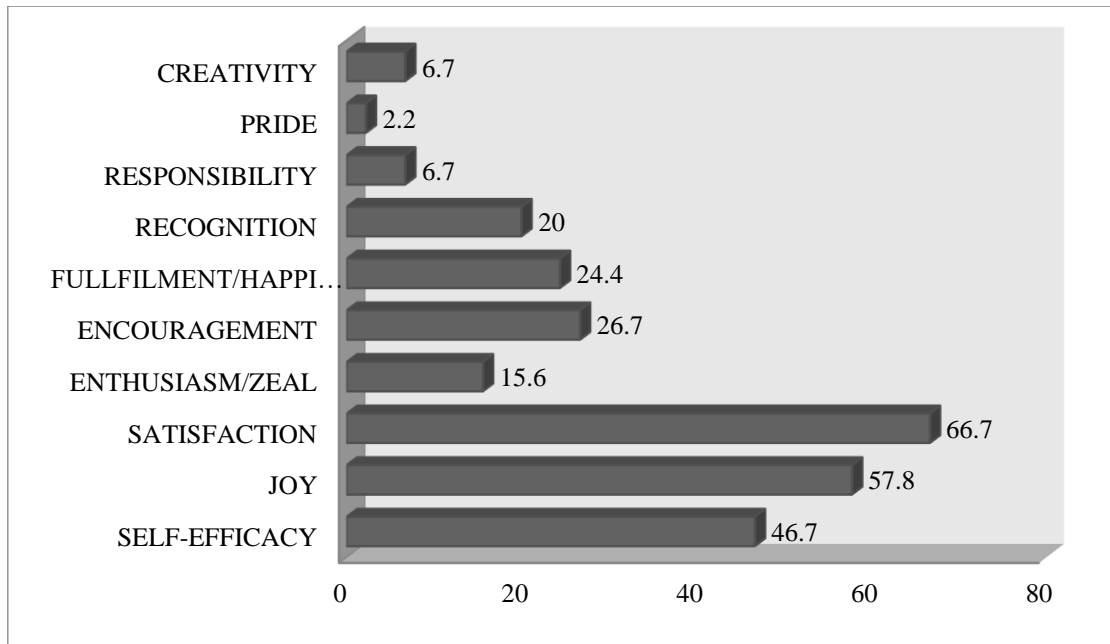
Graph 2: Teacher's emotional state due to student engagement

- *Open-ended QUESTION 82: What do you feel, when your students are disengaged?*

  Due to classroom disaffection, the participants admit that they experience various emotions eg. anger, insufficiency, law self–efficacy (Graph 3). The vast majority of them are overwhelmed by frustration, discouragement (they wonder what has gone wrong) and anxiety (trying to find the suitable teaching method so as to motivate the disengaged students).
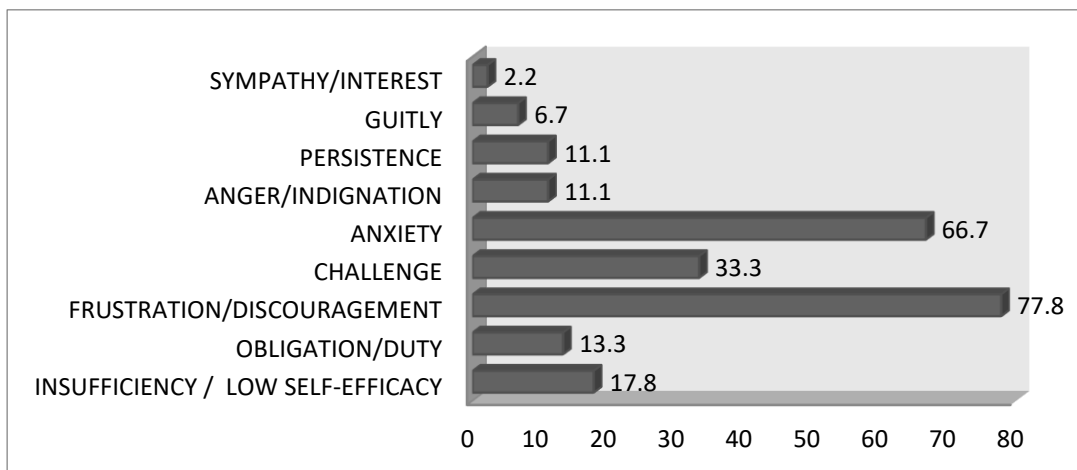
Graph 3: Teacher's emotional state due to student disengagement

- *Close-ended Question 92: Teachers support and develop close and caring relation with each student, in accordance to his/her engagement levels?*

Half of the participants (approximately 55 %) disagree with this statement identifying that teacher's support isn't affected by student engagement level. They claim that they support close and caring relation with each student, despite his/her engagement levels. In contrast, approximately 36% of the participants admit that teachers' support is affected by student engagement, since this happens unconsciously (Table 4).

Table 4: Teacher's support in relation to student engagement

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I absolutely disagree	13	28,9	28,9	28,9
	I disagree	12	26,7	26,7	55,6
	I do not even disagree	4	8,9	8,9	64,4
	I agree	10	22,2	22,2	86,7
	I totally agree	6	13,3	13,3	100,0
	Total	45	100,0	100,0	

A few interviewees' comments indicate their perspectives with regards to teacher-students relationships and their impact on classroom engagement.

Interviewee 9: "Of course, the relationships with our students are affected by their engagement… but we try hard so as not to be perceived by them" .

Interviewee 11: "When our students are engaged, they encourage us to continue…their disengagement discourages us" .

Interviewee 31: "If the teacher supports the engaged students more, does so unconsciously" .

Interviewee 14: "The engaged students encourage and help the teacher."

- *Open- ended question 133: Is it possible for all the students to be engaged?*

The great majority of the participants (66%) claim that they find it difficult to motivate each student (table 6). Some interviewees further explain and attribute this difficulty in engaging each student to different reasons, e.g.

Interviewee 10: " A particular teaching method can't be effective to any student.

Interviewee 32: "Today's students are very hard to get impressed and be engaged…how can this happen, when they are so familiar with new technologies and fast-moving pictures?)

Interviewee 19: each student has different interests. An activity can be engaging and appealing to some students, not to others.

Table 6: Is it possible for all the students to be engaged?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	9	20,5	20,5	20,5
	Probably no	20	45,5	45,5	65,9
	Probably yes	11	25,0	25,0	90,9
	Yes	4	9,1	9,1	100,0
	Total	44	100,0	100,0	

Discussion and Conclusions

Based on qualitative and quantitative data analysis, we infer that Greek kindergarten teachers are conscious of their responsibility on motivating each student. They identify that it's difficult to activate disengaged students, but when they foster authentic and caring relations with their student and provide structure and autonomy support, they manage to increase student's engagement level.

Greek teachers also admit that classroom engagement affects their emotional state. In particular, when their students are engaged, they are overwhelmed by enthusiasm or experience frustration due to their disaffection. Teachers also identify that students' disaffection challenges them, but doesn't undermine their emotional and instructional support and relations for those who are disengaged. Most teachers admit that they support close and caring relation with each student, despite his/her engagement levels. Our findings agree with previous research data, (e.g. Skinner & Pizer, 2012) since Greek teachers experience student engagement positively. However the results of our research do not confirm that kindergarten teachers support the engaged students more but support equally engaged and disengaged students.

Future research should focus on exploring and evaluating classroom engagement, taking into consideration students' and teachers' reports and perspectives. Classroom research is important to confirm what strategies are related to fostering engagement in order to provide teachers with new "tools" to enrich and enhance the learning process. The need for further training and support for teachers in order to adopt engaging teaching strategies is stressed, as well.

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WILL THE LEADERSHIP LAST? SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Ulla Soukainen and Elina Fonsen

Abstract

This article presents discussion about the construction of sustainable leadership for early childhood education by means of various discourses. The aim of the research was to investigate and provide information about sustainable leadership in early childhood education   The data were collected from discussions between a focus group of management teams of early childhood education units, and senior civil servants from the municipal early childhood education scheme who were involved in the project. The material was analysed using discourse analysis, with the aim of defining the principles of sustainable leadership in early childhood education. The research results show that to build sustainable leadership, we need a common understanding of the key factors influencing leadership structure, such as shared values and visions, the importance of strategy, communication, development work and pedagogical leadership structure.

Key words: development project; discourse analysis; early childhood education; focus group; sustainable leadership

Introduction

In recent years, Finnish early childhood education has been subjected to a series of reforms. In early 2013, the administration of early childhood education was transferred to the Ministry of Education and Culture from the Ministry of Health and Social services. In 2014, the guidance of the content of early childhood education was transferred from the National Institute for Health and Welfare to the Finnish National Agency for Education. The first phase of the new Early Childhood Act came into force on 1 August 2015, the Finnish National Agency for Education having earlier published the core curriculum for pre-primary education (2014). On the basis of the core curriculum, the municipalities had to draw up local curriculum and plans, which were introduced on 1 August 2016. The new National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) was published in October 2016. The local plans have been effective since 1 August 2017. Now the national curriculum guidelines for ECEC is normative and it is based on the law; this, therefore, has required a change in old practices. In substance, the nature of early childhood education has changed in three areas: the administrative sector of the change, the new

legislation and guidance documents, the pedagogy of the content-control system. (Fonsén & Vlasov, 2016).

Various studies have suggested that early childhood education should lay the foundation for lifelong learning (Karila, 2016). However, the recent political decision-making has not supported this in the legislation as regards the realization of the work of early childhood education. In October 2015, the Finnish Government presented Parliament with a bill (HE 80/2015), according to which the right to early childhood education is limited to 20 hours a week. In addition to capping early childhood education through this Law, the Government also approved an increased in the ratio of children per adult in ECEC. Before the change, the ratio was seven children per one adult in groups of over three-year-old children. Under the current regulations, the ratio increased by one child, that is, one adult can take care of eight children. In February 2016, Localfinland (Kuntaliitto) investigated the stand taken by municipalities on this limiting of the subjective right to day-care and the introduction of the changed ratio of children. The result was that 86% of the Finnish mainland municipalities answered the survey and 16% of those responding disclosed that they were not intending to limit the right to early childhood education. In many municipalities, the decision making was still in progress in February. At the time of the survey, about 12% of the respondents had decided to increase the ratio (Lahtinen & Selkee, 2016).

In 2014, the Trade Union for Education in Finland published a study entitled *The work-load of the day-care centre directors has become unreasonable* (Vesalainen, Cleve & Ilves, 2014). The purpose of their study was to examine the situation of day-care centre mangers and how it has changed since previous studies (Lastentarhanopettajaliitto 2004, OAJ & Lastentarhanopettajaliitto, 2007). In light of above mentioned surveys, it seems that attention has been paid in early childhood education to leadership, as directors are increasingly exempt from working with children. On the other hand, however, the number of staff, children and offices under a director's responsibility has increased. Day-care centre directors are also broadly responsible for the management of the various early childhood services. The proportion of the day- care centre directors working with children has fallen in the past ten years from 65% to 25%. The shift in focus away from regular education work has changed the skill requirements of directors. Organizational structures have also changed compared to the past. According to the survey, only 32% of the responding directors had only one day-care centre to operate. The number of distributed organizations has increased (Halttunen, 2009; Soukainen, 2015).

The above-mentioned changes, as well as the law, the curriculum and the management of the organizations, led to conflict in management work and the following questions arise: Does the leader try to lead the service or the teaching? Does the administrative work leave time to support staff in pedagogical matters? Early childhood education directors face many challenges in their work. The Sustainable Leadership project sought to find solutions to the above-mentioned leadership challenges in early

childhood education. The project was implemented in two different municipalities in the period 2015-2016. This article describes the focus group discussions between the departmental and municipal level management teams in the project, and then the discourse analysis describes the way in which sustainable leadership can be built in early childhood education.

Leadership in The Finnish Early Childhood Education

Until recently, very few doctoral studies had been conducted on early childhood leadership in Finland (Halttunen, 2009, Nivala, 1999). Only in the last few years have scholarly studies on leadership in early childhood obtained results that show there is a need for a different type of leadership (Akselin, 2013, Fonsén, 2014, Heikka, 2014, Soukainen, 2015). In addition to these dissertations, the Kindergarten Teachers' Union in Finland (LTOL) together with the Trade Union of Education (OAJ) published studies on leadership in 2004, 2007 and 2014. Karila (2001) listed the tasks of the directors of day-care centres and graded them into five categories: work organization management; the service organization's management; management of care, education and teaching; acting as an expert in early childhood education and day-care; and knowledge management. The categories of the management of care and education and teaching can be thought of as pedagogical management-related, since these categories include the following themes: the basic task of high-quality care, upbringing and education for children, support for upbringing at home, supporting and managing the development of staff awareness and constructing an operational culture, in particular of a pedagogical culture.

Recent research has provided new perspectives on early childhood leadership since Karila's listing. Akselin's (2013) research examined the formation of strategic leadership in early childhood education. According to Akselin's study, the directors of early childhood education considered that the aim of strategic leadership was public relations, the purpose of which was to maintain appreciation or gain added value. In municipal organizations, its purpose was to secure resources. Heikka (2014), in turn, called for a description of the responsibilities, tools, and processes across different levels of the municipal organization. This can be described as a shared pedagogical leadership strategy. Heikka also expresses her opinion on investing in basic and continuing training for directors, as well as checking the qualification criteria. According to Fonsén's (2014) study, the weak definition of work descriptions, too many responsibilities, and job fragmentation affect the endurance of directors, as well as the good implementation of pedagogical leadership. The study of leadership in distributed organizations of early childhood education (Soukainen, 2015) draws attention to the significance of the structures, and strongly emphasizes the importance of the structures as a means of managing large entities.

In 2014, in the first phase of the reform of the Early Childhood Education Act there was also discussion on changing the qualification requirement for the directors of day-care centres. The suggestion

was that a master's level university degree should replace of the current bachelor's level requirement of a qualification as a kindergarten teacher and sufficient experience of management (Opettaja, 2014, L272/2005 10 § e mom). However, the proposal did not lead to a change of the requirements, even though the leadership of day-care centres was seen as being as important as the leadership of schools. Early childhood education is currently undergoing a transformation as regards the new law, as well as the new curriculum. There is a trend similar to the one in basic education in the 1980s, when it became a requirement for the principal of a school to have completed a degree in school administration. The justification then for this requirement was as follows: the educational objectives had to be defined in detail, the change in the decision-making system, the changes in the control system and the constant acceleration of social change (Lahtero, 2011, 23). In addition to these changes made almost 40 years ago, are the recent challenges posed by the new curriculum, and, for example, the increase in technology and multi-literacy, all of which necessitate new pedagogical skills for leaders and staff of early childhood education today. The diversity of different cultures also required changes in cooperation with parents, and as consequence, more and different interpersonal skills than before are needed.

Sustainable Leadership

Sustainable leadership can be seen as a response to the ever-changing claims mentioned previously. In examining sustainability, the aspects of economic, human, and social sustainability need to be looked at in addition to the ecological perspective. The systematic nature of the changes requires the integration of different perspectives of sustainability (Kasvio & Räikkönen, 2010). Hargreaves (2006) considered that the most important basis for sustainable leadership is that there is time for leadership. Without sufficient time resources, leadership has no opportunity to be sustainable. Leaders need time resources for themselves and their staff as regards innovativeness and long-term development. The final reports of the Advisory Board on Early Childhood Education indicate that the management of resources is currently inadequate, and this has resulted in an increased responsibility of the staff for the quality and development of early childhood education (Social and Health Ministry, 2007:5, 2007:6, 2007:7).

The leadership structure of early childhood education needs clarification. In addition to development work, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) also require the active exclusion of old dysfunctional habits. The reform of the curriculum, as well as the new Early Childhood Education Act, have provided a juncture at which to challenge old practices in light of the new goals. In organizational cultures, the "in-house rules" are often thought of as self-evident truths without questioning the arguments for the action (see for example Harisalo, 2008, Schein, 1989). Hargreaves and Fink (2006) also argue that there can be tasks that could be performed more efficiently by a professional group other than teachers and

directors. The change in the structures of early childhood organizations has led to the need to look at the responsibilities and job descriptions of the director and other employees.

Halttunen (2009) states that the fragmentation of the leader's job descriptions and the expansion of responsibilities started in the 1990s. The expansion of leadership responsibility for several day-care units and different services has distanced the leaders from the everyday work as well as pedagogical support and the focus of their work has become more administrative. Directors have less and less time to conduct the core task - early childhood pedagogy. According to Parrila and Fonsén (2016) the leader's job description and the clarification of responsibilities is an important target for developing early childhood leadership. It is also essential to define the role of the kindergarten teacher as a part of the structure of shared leadership. Parrila (2011) emphasizes that clear leadership structures and operating models also support employees' well-being and the development of know-how.

Recent Finnish early childhood education studies (e.g. Fonsén, 2014, Heikka, 2014, Soukainen, 2015) show that a clear leadership structure and distribution of responsibility support the success of leadership. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) define sustainable leadership as shared leadership with shared goals and work values. The common understanding of the organization's basic task and the sharing of a common vision and strategy will thus become a key method for sustainable leadership. Unregulated distribution of leadership by delegating tasks to staff will only lead to failure. It is therefore important that structures for shared leadership are specifically defined with the staff. Sustainable leadership can be considered to be built through the confidence of the staff and professionalism. Kocolowski (2010) writes that in the background to shared leadership there are shared common values and an organization culture. Shared leadership, at its best, produces the engagement of employees and makes them responsible actors. It functions by empowering staff to take full advantage of their skills (see Rodd, 2006, Woods, 2004). Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) consider that the success of a Finnish school is the result of guiding - not controlling – leadership, where the trust in teachers is strong.

As Hargreaves and Fink (2006) emphasize, the sustainable director takes care of his or her own the development as well as the staff's development. Sustainable directors do not consume human resources by overwhelming their staff or themselves with too high demands. Instead, these directors try to produce more human resources and capital, promote learning and development in all members of the organisation. As Hargreaves (2007) argues sustainable leadership renews people's energy. Continuous innovation and change are a threat which will burn out/exhaust the staff if they do not feel that the development work is important from their own standpoint. Kasvio and Räikkönen (2010) consider that one dimension of sustainable working life is human sustainability. Productivity and efficiency requirements in the short term can consume human resources in such a way that the requirements finally turn against their purpose. In the case of the educational organization, the increased human capital also extends to

the children - and thus benefits society as a whole. Sergiovanni (1998) has used the terms human capital and leadership capital. By increasing the leaders' human capital towards good leadership, it also produces the growth of capital for the teachers' knowledge. This has the effect of adding value to the teachers' competence to teach and through that students learning. Fonsén (2014) has also applied these concepts of human capital as the elements of pedagogical leadership in early childhood education. The leader's human, social, and academic capital can be described as knowledge, awareness, skill, and ability. Knowledge capital is knowledge of the substance, i.e. good pedagogical knowledge, and knowledge of the guiding documents (acts, curriculum etc.). Awareness is the knowledge of the pedagogy being implemented and the ability to look at it critically. It involves knowledge of the state of pedagogy that has been implemented, which requires different forms of discussion and assessment tools. Skill is leadership know-how, the ability to guide staff to implement high-quality pedagogy and the ability to lead development work. It is strongly associated with the discussion about the values and the early childhood curriculum. The element of ability is the ability to argue and pedagogically validate the pedagogical choices and practical decisions.

Hargreaves (2007) describes sustainable leadership as being based on continuity. Continuous changes in leadership structures consume human capital. In addition, continuous changes weaken long-term development work. Sustainable leadership strongly supports sustainable learning. Paying attention to the people who need special support and providing resources to support them is crucial. Resources should also be allocated regionally in a sustainable and socially just way to prevent regional inequality. Good practices and know-how should be shared in networks and not just used to promote the quality of a personal unit. Stakeholders are important to the sustainable director, as are politicians who speak on behalf of the sector. In addition, Kasvio and Räikkönen (2010) highlight the social dimension of sustainable working life. They place a focus on prevention of social inequalities, educational equality, and a fair distribution of employment opportunities in society. Kero and Perko (2016, 3) summarize sustainable leadership the following way: "*Sustainable leadership is a continuous development and development along the way. It is an attitude that determines the direction and vision - the will to make things more sustainably.*"

Sustainable Leadership in Early Childhood Education – a Development Project as a Research Context

The Sustainable Leadership in Early Childhood Education project started in 2015 with a project design meeting to which potential participants were invited. A project plan was presented by Ediva Ltd., with specifications being made by the participants as regards timetables, processes, and costs. Two cities participated in the project, one of which is among the six largest municipalities in Finland and one which

has a population of less than 50,000. In the larger municipality, five day-care units piloted the project. The participants were the directors, deputy directors and special education teachers of early childhood education from each unit. In addition, six people were involved from the administration, with a total of 21 participants in this municipality. From the other municipality, four day-care units were piloted, with a total of 16 participants.

The aim of the project was to strengthen and clarify the leadership of early childhood education organizations' response to the challenges posed by the current administrative changes and economic pressures. Clarifying the management structure between the director, the deputy director and the special education teacher of early childhood education was one of the key goals during the project.

The day-care centres which were selected for this project were already interested in development work. The model used for the project was the so-called "spearhead" method. The key principle was to target development activities in the centres with the greatest capacity to develop, and then to expand the development work to the other day care centres in the municipalities. In addition, seminars were organized during the project which widely targeted the whole early childhood education staff in these municipalities. Focus group discussions were only conducted in the larger city in this project.

Research Task and Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to investigate and provide information about sustainable leadership in early childhood education. The quality of leadership was assessed via the survey questionnaire used in the project. However, we have not looked at the assessment results in this study; rather, we have focussed on participants' discussion of the results.

From the focus group discussions, concerning the results of the Leadership assessment those factors that in the participants' opinion influence the building of sustainable leadership, were analysed. The research questions guiding this study were:

What do the ECE directors discuss on the basis of leadership assessment?

What discourses can be identified in the focus group discussions?

Focus Group Discussions and Discourse Analysis

The philosophical basis behind the discourse analysis can be considered to be a socio-constructivist theory of the social construction of reality (see Berger & Luckman, 1966). The function of language is thus seen as a key, not only in portraying reality, but also as a constructer of reality (Jokinen, Juhila & Suoninen, 1993). Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) describe the starting point for discourse analysis by stating that information is never reachable from outside linguistic discourses, so the discourse itself is the object of analysis in the production of scientific knowledge. Epistemologically, knowledge that is

accessible to a researcher is thus context-oriented, relative, and subject-dependent (Taylor, 2001). According to Alvesson and Kärreman (2000a), the linguistic turn in the post-modern era has given rise to a special interest in discourses in organizational research. Knowledge is not a direct mirror for the image of reality, but linguistic expressions reflect reality from different perspectives. As Suoninen (1993) emphasizes, the same phenomenon can have different interpretations, whereby reality is spoken about differently through the interpretation given to it. Discourses are shared systems of meanings from the different groups of actors.

Jokinen, Juhila and Suoninen (1993) argue, that meaning making systems are complex in nature. Meaning making systems differ from each other and appear in coexistence. They can also be referred to as a repertoire, but in this article, we use the term 'meaning system'. Alvesson and Kärreman (2000b) describe the different dimensions of discourse analysis as micro- and macro discourse. In discourse analysis, local meanings which emerge from the interpretations of society can be differentiated, and even global macro-level meanings can be differentiated from the microstructural contexts of the actors.

In this study, focus group interviews were used as the method of gathering material. The participants of the larger municipality discussed the results of the Leadership Evaluation Survey. Due to the informants' knowledge of the context of the units, it can be assumed that they had a common shared social construction of the units' reality. Due to the fact that they all worked in the same organization, they had developed a mutual understanding of the language and conceptual categories (Lahtero, 2011, 52). Marková, Linell, Grossen and Orvig (2007) call focus group discussions a locally defined function based on historically and culturally shared social knowledge. Dialogue produces a jointly allocated reality which is shared by those in the discussion. There are matters shared in history, not necessarily present at the current moment of discussion, that define a common understanding of the general state of affairs.

According to Jokinen and Juhila (1993), power relations between discourses can be viewed by analysing the mutual hierarchy of discourses. In exploring the diversity of discourse, the power analysis can also be extended into various parallel discourses and to look at the factors that are prevalent in the discourse. In research ethics, it should also be noted that the researcher is one of the links in the expression of the meanings. Jokinen and Juhila (1993) emphasize that in a dialogue with the data, the researcher brings his or her own meanings of interpretation and the significance of the material is based on the choices made.

In this study, discourse analysis is used to examine the various discussions concerning the results of the Leadership Evaluation Survey. The purpose of the research is to identify the various meanings that the subjects rely on when they discuss the evaluation results of their work units. The participants were asked to describe the strengths and development targets of the units based on

leadership measurements. In analysing the focus group discussions, the focus was placed on what factors are described in the background of the measurement result, and what discourses the participants rely on in analysing these factors.

Methods - Implementation of the Study

At the beginning of the project, the participants from both municipalities were subjected to an electronic survey aimed at measuring the current state of their perceptions of the different areas of leadership. In addition to the individuals involved in the project, the staff members of their units were also requested to respond to the survey. The survey had 30 variables classified under four headings. The headings were: organization leadership, leadership structure, leadership in knowledge and wellbeing at work, and leading yourself. The evaluation was carried out on a scale from 1 to 5, where a value of 1 described a low-quality level and 5 a high level of quality. The results of the assessment of quality of leadership is analysed and discussed in another study (Authors, forthcoming). In the current research, the interest is in the discursive explanations the participants saw as being behind the result.

In the larger city, focus group discussions were organized according to the results of the Leadership Evaluation Survey; hence, there were four focus groups. The discussions were based on the survey result per unit, which were then compared to the results of the entire body of material. Prior to their participation, the participants were requested to sign a written consent form, to confirm their participation. Participants were asked to discuss the ideas that emerged from the measurement results from the survey. Discussions were recorded and transcribed. The time reserved for discussion was 40 minutes (the length ranged from 22 to 38 minutes). This article surveys the results of the material transcribed. The quantitative results of leadership assessment are to be reported separately (Authors, forthcoming). The process of the project is depicted in Figure 1. Each workshop included the participants of only one municipality. Both municipalities took part in the seminars.
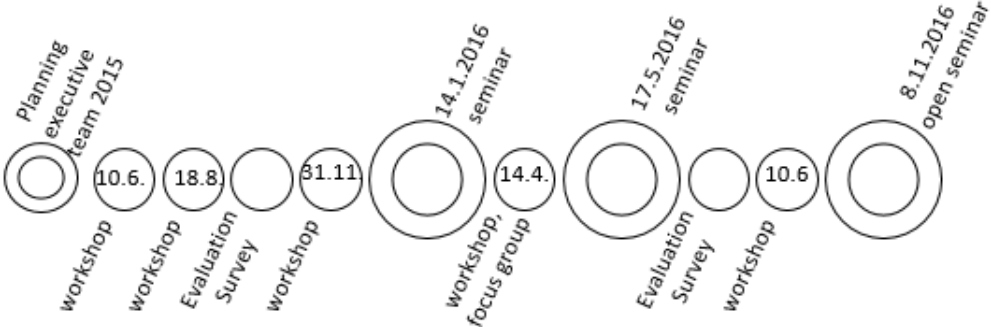

Figure 1. The process of the project in the larger city.

The data contained a set of themes, in which the construction of leadership was given different meanings and themes. These themes were: vision and strategy, values, communication, organizational structure (e.g. roles, meeting practices, management structures, roles in management structures) and development. The specific aim of the analysis was to discover those discourses that give leadership meanings from different perspectives, and based on these perspectives, to find development targets for guiding the leadership of early childhood education towards the principles of sustainable leadership. In this article, the management teams of the units represent "the field", and the director of early childhood education and the service chiefs represent the management team, or "leaders".

Results

The discussion about strategy and vision - to attach the work to the goals. The management team had a robust discussion about the importance of vision and strategy. The management team argued that they regularly reported on strategy. However, the evaluation result provided by "the field's" representatives was weaker than the management team's evaluation result for strategy. The interpretation provided by the participants ("field") in the debate, relied on a strong common vision at the day care centre level. Based on the discussions, it was felt that basic tasks need to be clarified in the day care centres from time to time. The curriculum was described as a good guide and provided a basis for the whole activity. The debate concerning the implementation of the curriculum was described in the expression "it may also improve the atmosphere". The national curriculum gained a central role: "The Curriculum of Early Childhood Education is a practical guide to pedagogy." On the other hand, child-specific early childhood education plans were seen as needing further improvement. The discussion showed that in multi-professional teams the nurses were not necessarily aware of the contents of the child's individual educational plans, and they may not even have read them, since the plans were described as being the responsibility of the kindergarten teacher. Mutual understanding about the children's educational plans was seen as being important in order to design the child group's activity jointly from the perspective of development.

The discussion on communication - tensions between the actors. Challenges related to communication emerged in many different discussions, as well as being related to many different issues, and tensions were described between various levels of operators. Directors send out messages, but these messages may not always reach the staff. This is due to the immense amount of information and the fact that a lot of information comes by email and is not always very important. On the other hand, it was also suggested that knowledge does reach "the field", and that there is still room for improvement. This discussion by "the field" raised an image of inadequate dialogue and that the staff in "the field" feel their voice was not given enough attention. The management team, on the other hand, described a systematic

and regular communication strategy and the reasons for the changes. However, the staff (kindergarten teachers and nurses) gave a low rating to those issues in the survey. According to the leaders, the ability to respond to information from the staff varies. At the unit level, "the field" saw that it was challenging for the whole staff to participate in the day-care centre's common meetings. Thus, information was often disseminated by memos and written material, and the need for discussion on the matter was ignored. This could cause misunderstandings: "*You adopt the things that are written differently. When you read the paper, you may not adopt it as it was intended. Responsibility, of course, lies with both the issuer as well as a recipient.*" Or: "*Information flow or communication is always raised whenever you talk. There's always something to say about it. It's to be developed in every organization.*"

In addition, the role of the special teacher as an "information dealer" arose in the debate. In one group, the participants questioned the role of the special teacher as a spokesperson, targeting the question directly to the teacher present. However, the discussion went on to another theme before the teacher had answered the question. The special teacher saw that it is very important that knowledge of the special needs of children becomes known to the director. This was solved by the implementation of the discussion about the needs of the children with the director. The special teacher thinks that special teachers should be more involved in the pedagogical discussions and, hence, would strengthen them. In the discussion with the leaders, it was thought that the role of the special teacher should be especially strengthened based on his or her knowledge of the pedagogy in the units. Thus, special teachers could act as part of the leadership structure by providing up-to-date information to the directors. It was also hoped that the position of special teacher would become part of the regional leadership team. It was felt that the challenge in large units was the weak "visibility" of the special teacher.

The discussion of development – various perspectives. There were many interpretations of the development. The opinions of the leaders and "the field" were different, and, in addition, the discussion of "the field" group was even contradictory. On the one hand, the staff of the day-care centres explained that the development work of the whole organization was led from top down. On the other hand, they also said that development based on their own initiatives was possible, and this was also recognized as a strength. Discussion concerning the curriculum work was considered to be at the core of the development discussion. However, the participants doubted that all the guidelines were known to the whole staff at the unit level, and this could also cause conflict. One part of the discussion concerning well-being is a good example:

In our day-care centre, well-being is being improved regularly…but well-being received the lowest points in the survey…on the other hand, it's a broad concept. There are some programs and everything… The required conversations will take place, but the whole staff will not be involved. So not everyone is involved in welfare discussion…

In connection with the development of the work, the level of values and supporting know-how were also discussed. Drawing up a training plan based on competence mapping was seen as serving its purpose. Having concrete development tasks and open reflections were seen as important. The discussions showed that the management team supported pedagogical development work. The flow of information and communication were mentioned as perpetual tasks for development.

The discussion of values – support for individual's empowerment. In the discussions, the significance of common values was considered to be an important guiding principle. The shared value discussions in the units contributed the need for commitment to the values. Trust became an important value in supporting the workplace climate, was and depicted as a productive empowering position for the individual. Individuals have to feel free to discuss difficult matters, take risks, and share their different opinions. This was important for learning and hence development as one of the participants described: *"…also dare to fail…because it is based on trust…dare to ask stupid questions and learn from it…"* In the focus group discussions, the participants talked about values in general, but they did not explicitly reveal what the defined values in that organization were.

The discussion of organizational structure - unsettled practices. The management team's discussion about the structure of pedagogical leadership showed it to be being meaningful and desirable. On the one hand, "the field" described the leaders as using their power when the structure was given from the "top"; this discussion also showed that space for the uniqueness of the units was required. On the other hand, however, it was felt that the idea of pedagogical leadership was unclear. In the description of the leaders, "the field" appeared to be diverse. In "the field", the ability to receive information was described as varied. The leaders considered that pedagogical discussion had a range of levels in "the field". Thus, the leaders tried to find a common structure for pedagogical leadership. The leaders argued that pilot studies can first be used to create a coherent structure and thus produce a consistent practice throughout the organization. The participants questioned the level of engagement in "the field" and wanted increased commitment to the common guidelines. It was considered that it would be a good idea to discover what the current situation was as regards: the structures used for pedagogical discussions in different regions, the kind of meetings being held, and the individuals involved. These data could be collected in a table from which the overall situation could easily be understood. The table should also include the frequency of the meetings, the themes, and the director's role. The director of the day-care centre should play a supporting role in these meetings as a pedagogical leader, but this is not necessarily the case at the present.

The significance of pedagogical leadership was also sought by discussing the role of pedagogical leadership at the level of the various professional groups. This basic task was seen to be the

responsibility of everyone. The director's job description was evident from the point of view of responsibilities and obligations. The assignments of the deputy director and special teacher varied between units. In some units, the special teacher visited regularly according to the "schedule", while in others he/she was consulted on a case-by-case basis. The staff also contacted the special teacher, because of the lack of a management structure in the case of issues that should really be discussed with their supervisor. In addition to the ambiguities of their assignments / responsibilities, the co-operation between the director and the deputy director was also considered to be a challenge. There have been no commonly agreed practices. Therefore, it was considered that the creation of practices would increase the flow of information, and delegating tasks would be one of the tools used to share the leader's workload.

Time management became a key topic. It was embodied in the implementation of the annual cycle, the time reserved in the calendar and the day-care unit for common meeting times. Managing a distributed organization was seen as being quite difficult in the discussions. The directors had considered different practices to enable staff to attend meetings:

It was found that both day-care centres had to reserve an hour. Meetings are organized in both day-care centres. Every second week you meet all the staff. Then there are meetings for the whole staff…

For these focus group discussions, different meanings could be seen in relation to the concept of pedagogical leadership structures, common lines, and fluency of information flow.

The Ethics and Reliability of the Research

The research was carried out in accordance with the research ethics requirements of the Research Ethics Advisory Board (2012-2014). Permission for the data collected in the project was requested from the participants and they were informed about the study. In the case of the larger municipality, a different /a separate researcher undertook the analysis of the data because the initial researcher was a participant in the focus group discussion with the leaders. The identity of the people/individuals involved in the study has been removed from the data.

In the analysis of the data, a challenging task for the researchers was to ignore their own assumptions in order to identify the emerging meaning systems genuinely and equally in the various participants' groups. According to Taylor (2001), research participants in discourse analysis should be considered to be producers of information instead of being research objects. The researcher must not use power, as all the voices should be allowed to rise equally among different discourses. In this study, the analysis was based on the texts and the meaning systems were reviewed from the verbal material. As a consequence, the interaction-related additional information was not processed. (See e.g. Jokinen, Juhila & Suoninen, 2016).

Discussion and Conclusions

The changes that have already been made, and those that are still being realized in early childhood education, are a challenge to both directors and staff. The Early Childhood Education Act (1973/36) defined ten goals which must be implemented regardless of how a municipality has limited subjective day-care rights or how a family has decided to use the early childhood education services. This challenged the municipalities implementing the local early childhood education curriculum in August 2017. The changes - or we may say reforms - are a turning point that can be responded to by implementing sustainable leadership.

Based on the results of this research, it can be seen that finding a common view between the leaders and "the field" is a challenge. As the debate concerning the development and the management structure showed, the different interpretations can be a challenge to leadership. However, shared leadership is a construction of sustainable leadership. As Hargreaves and Fink (2006) emphasized, shared leadership in sustainable leadership is the sharing of goals and values. A common vision and strategy are the necessary tangible agreements and they also build sustainable leadership. In the discussion between the leaders and "the field", various meanings were given to the terms power, actor, and responsibility. In the focus group discussion involving "the field", the search for a common structure was perceived as a risk which might limit its own operational capacity; this was also identified in the discussion of the leaders. However, the management team thought that the common management structure could also strengthen each region's unique structures. According to Kocolowski (2010), sharing a common set of values and operating culture is crucial when organizations are building a meaningful reality. There were also differences in the discourse concerning the information flow. The reasons and responsibility for the lack of information flow was seen being outside one's own group. According to the opinion of the leaders, there was sufficient or perhaps too much communication and information, but according to the opinion of "the field" there was not enough information, and the communication was poorly timed. "The field" also considered that the information was given about unfinished matters and often had to be corrected later.

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) emphasize that creating the structures with the staff. In this study, the goals of the structures and the development projects seemed to relate to different meanings. Kasvio and Räikkönen (2010) define a sustainable working life as consisting of four dimensions: the ecological, human, social, and economic dimensions. *The ecological dimension* can be seen in the aforementioned discourses as a wish for clarity as regards the structures and the common understanding of the vision. The main goal of the ecological dimension is the rational organization of the work so that its performance does not consume an excessive amount of the limited resources. Clear job descriptions and jointly-agreed

processes also increase ecological endurance. *The human dimension* appears strongly in the discourses of the Sustainability Leadership Project. Human sustainability can be viewed by pondering the meaningfulness of work, the development of competence and the sense of satisfaction gained from work. Discussions about the atmosphere and discussions that emerged from team spirit reveal the meaningful content of the work. The importance of a common value and the implementation of an early childhood education curriculum created an opportunity for open reflection and development. *The social dimension* can be viewed, for example, with fair treatment in the workplace. A clear definition of work will help to achieve social sustainability. The equitable distribution of knowledge through the role of the special teacher is also a part of socially sustainable leadership. *The economic dimension* requires the need to ensure competitiveness and the level of productivity that employees have the opportunity to acquire. A clear vision and a strategy to achieve a common goal will also enable competitiveness in the future. Although families will increasingly have different options for choosing their early childhood education service, based on customer satisfaction surveys, it can be seen that families are currently happy with early childhood education. However, it is important to assess and develop models continually, including the content, and leadership of early childhood education. Currently, the participation rates in Finland are below the average in OECD countries. The aim is to raise the number of children participating in early childhood education in Finland to 95% by 2020 (Pakanen, 2016), in which case resolute leadership and adequate organizational and leadership structures will be needed.

In the light of the above-mentioned discourses and the conclusions drawn from them, it can be assumed that Hargreaves' (2007) seven principles of sustainable leadership are also to be found in the leadership of early childhood education. In this study, they emerged as factors of common values, vision and strategy, communication, the development of work, and the structure of pedagogical leadership. Hargreaves' principles of community involvement, constructive co-operation and social justice are realized through common values, vision, and strategy. In this study, from the point of view of communication, Hargreaves' shared leadership and trust are related, as is partnership. The development of work includes sustainable learning, resource development, renewal, and innovation. Hargreaves' continuity, shared leadership and trust appear in this study as structures of pedagogical leadership. Instead of various discourses, we need to create a common understanding of sustainable leadership in early childhood education. Finally, the question in the title of the article can be answered: leadership will last, and through sustainable leadership it can lead to a sustainable working life and sustainable early childhood education.

Acknowledgments

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MODELS OF ROLE-STRUCTURE IN PROJECT-BASED GAMES FOR CHILDREN IN KINDERGARTEN ABOUT 5-6 YEARS OLD

Yingying Wang, Min Zhao

Abstract

In this paper we report on the use of project-based learning in teaching the children about 5-6 years old.We call it"Project-based game".It's a way of proceeding through the organization of mutual collaboration of children to solve the real problems of games, from which can excise children on transferring knowledge and problem-solving ability. Children work as a team. Each team member has the different role and task. So how to integrate resources to play a team advantage, and how to tap the maximum potential of each team member are particularly important. This study was trying to build a role of structural models for children to explain the relationship between the different roles in the project learning and reference for researchers. This study accomplished the following works:

we interviewed normal teachers and children which from different classes, aware of the problems of grouping when teachers carry out the project game. Then we tracked and observed a number of project cases in kindergarten, designed the questions and tasks and collected a wealth of experimental data. Through the collation and analysis, we finally obtained significant achievement in this study "The role of structure model in project-based games for the children in kindergarten about 5-6 years old".

Key words: Children; Models of role-structure; Project-based games;Team

Introduction

The aim of the present study is to explore how to build models of role-structure in project-based games, and analyze the effect of the model. The game is one type of children learning, which includes designing 、problem-solving、decision making、investigative activities and the opportunity to work collaboratively.All the roles were formed naturally when children started the game and the role structure was already present.After reading the related information in the field, found that there's a lack of documenting about children's collaboration work, about how they gave feedbacks, how they articulate and synthesize their work with that of others about the Role-structure in Project-based Games .So it's the necessity to study .

In recent years there has been an ongoing study in China,the ministry of education issued "In the guidelines for the study and development of children aged 3-6", Instructed the teacher to education the children of 5-6 years old:need to understand the meaning of the rules, can negotiate with peers to make game and activity.

Although many researchers have been widely studied about the definition and characteristics of projects in the game early childhood learning, efficiency .but there are the following three aspects of problems: one is to explore the essence and core of cooperative learning and its internal mechanism study is slightly less than; Second, although researchers have studied students' learning situation through platforms such as Moodle, few researchers have explored the tool support in the learning process. Thirdly, there are few empirical studies on the types of children learning and related empirical studies in the project game, which requires us to find a new theory to further explore the children's learning in the project game.

5-6 years old Children's cooperation learning in kindergarten

The development of early cooperative behavior in children is closely related to the development of social interaction, social cognition and self-concept. From a social point of view, some researchers suggest that social goals have an obvious impact on cooperative behavior(Doich 1960).The study looked at the impact of collaboration, personal orientation, and competition orientation on people's cooperation and competitive behavior. The result is that the percentage of selected cooperative strategies under cooperative orientation is higher than those of other guidance directed to choose the cooperative strategy. In addition, in childhood, cooperative behavior is influenced by social goal orientation, researchers (Xiaodong Li) found that "children to achieve social goals, their behavior is also different, under the condition of cooperative goals more children's cooperative behavior."

There are other researchers(FizgeraldM,Frankie G.H,1982)the results of the study suggest that children's cooperative tendencies increased. chosen from the kindergarten middle shift to the third grade of

experiments have been carried out to study the subjects, the study found that: with the growth of grade, children's competition gradually reduce, cooperative behavior gradually increased, and the cooperation level is higher and higher(Youshui Li,Lilin Zhang,2000). Other researchers,found that older students are more willing to cooperate(Yan Li,Zifang Cao,1997).The research results show that although the preschool age differences in cognitive development cooperation have not reached significant level, but as the growth of the age, gradually reduce the proportion of children's objective conditional cognition, outcome, common interests and values of cognitive are gradually increasing(Qin Chen,2004). The further study of the scholars showed that the cognitive level of cooperative behavior was gradually improved with age(Qin Chen,Lijuan Pang,2010).

In the field of cognition, there are researchers from the perspective of social cognition and self-cognition. The study found that the cooperative behavior of children was closely related to their self-concept and their perception of the relationship between themselves and others. The cognitive tendency of children's self-centeredness not only interferes with their exploration of world activities, but also influences their peer interaction and cooperation. However, the development of the relationship between the object and the object can effectively promote the development of peer cooperation (Brownell&carriger, 1990).a large number of studies have shown that the individual cognitive factors, such as the perception of the intentions of others, for others' attitude, perception of situation, and so on, in the interaction between the individual plays an important role. That is, how children perceive themselves, their peers, and the tasks they face will affect how children behave in groups.

Some studies have found that the ability of children to adopt complementary roles is closely related to the ability to adapt to each other and complement each other. When children can correctly understand the causal relationship between their own behaviors and other behaviors, and consciously take the complementary behaviors with their peers, he can cooperate more effectively with his peers. The guidance, demonstration, encouragement and reinforcement of the peer will enhance the understanding and coordination among individuals and promote the beginning of cooperation. The cooperation between adults and children is the way to guide and be directed, while in the peer group, children are cooperating through communication, consultation and integration of views.

Factor affecting children's learning in Project-based Games

In addition to the problems existing in the game, the key actions of successful teams and failed teams are the most influential factors in the game.4 major behaviors had been documented after observing the 105 children behave and they are:

First, It's discussion. In the drama about the ugly ducking, what children did mostly was discussing. In this project and it took them 4 weeks to finish this drama after the continuous discussion. Secondly, it's

organizing and management behavior. For example, there was a boy who organized the group and assigned different jobs to different team members. Ultimately, they became the first group that completed the task and every one of the group was especially cheerful.Thirdly, exploratory behavior. After trial and error, Children found out that using two hands would pull out carrots faster and that if they had cleared up the farm it would be a lot easier to plant.And lastly, it's promotion or regulatory behavior. By which we mean any behaviors that could help promote coordination and development of a game or project. For example, In a performance, the bee costumes were not enough. Then children decided to make a new bee costume with a yellow T-shirt and some old CDs together. And they also created a Superman role to solve some problems, and these behaviors all provided a support for the performance.From the observing it could say that role-structure is influenced by the role task and the key behaviors. But in the study we also found that there was no clear link between key behaviors and role tasks every time.

After reading the related information in the field,how they gave feedbacks, how they articulate and synthesize their work with that of others had been found.it was shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Literature overview

CONTEXT Collaborating With Other	UNDERLYING DEFICIENCY	INTERVENTION	SOURCE
giving and getting Feedback Collaborating on written work distributing work Equitable	Children are used to working with others,but not with collaborating,giving feedback,articulating and synthesizing one's work with that of others. Children often fail to distribute work equitably on their own	"Collaborative and multimedia interactive learning environment"(CaMILE) Providing norms for individual accountability. Incorporating the "jigsaw" method and reciprocal teaching.	Hmelo,Guzdial and Toms (1998) Barron et al. (1998) Brown (1992)

Methods

A study was conducted for the children in kindergarten about 5-6 years old across Xindu district,Chengdu,China and al l of them were the top class children. The sampling process of municipalities and kindergarten is based on the easier observation and case studies.on the grounds of which we chose a kindergarten in the countryside with the conditions.

The study was conducted from the end of 2015 to the beginning of 2016. It used the questionnaire included 26 items about kindergarten teachers' viewpoint to children's competences and abilities and also about the grounds for dividing children into groups.Other questions in the study were fixed-format or open-ended questions.All the teacher of the top classes (it has 3 top classes,each of it has 3 teachers)answered the questionnaire. Through the questionnaire , the children in 95 % of the interval were selected as samples.(this would make the sample more universal).It comprised 80 participants(46 males).

The study divided the children into four groups.Every two groups played the same game and twice a week.

Results

According to *Guideline to the Learning and Development of Children Aged 3 ～ 6* and the statistics of 1st

kindergarten of Xindu District, Sichuan, China, children 5 years old when the brain weighs about 75% of adults, 6 years of age about 90% of adults. The structure of the brain has been quite mature. Action to enhance flexibility, can skillfully make muscle movement. Improve the ability to balance, can climb, slide, etc.. Fine motor function has been greatly improved, can more freely control the wrist and fingers, flexible use of some tools, can be used to shape the fine part of the mud. So this stage of children's similarity is better, suitable for this research.

Considering 5 ～ 6 years old children's age characteristics, 40 children at this stage were chosen as

samples of the research. These children were selected from the whole kindergarten, and were divided into two groups on average, which were labeled group A and group B. The research took 4 weeks with a total of 8 classes to complete the project, which included theme disscusion, leader selection, making plans, tasks arrangement and final show, etc.

During the project-based games, the behavior of the two groups at each stage and different links was observed and recorded. According to the behavior of the two groups, such as discussion, consultation, role arrangement, making plans, task arrangement, the final show, and so on, the 10 point system was adopted to mark the performance in accordance with the degree of excellence. For example, the simple plan contained several steps was maked by A group, which was shown in Figure 1. According to the details of the plan, such as time, location content, and so on, these elements were considered to evaluate and score. So, A group scored 8 because there was a hand drawn plan, and B group scored 0, because there was no plan. The statistical results were shown in Table2.
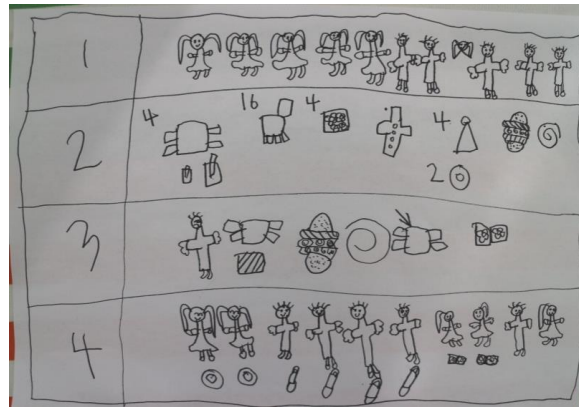
Figure 1. The task arrangement and plan of group A

Table 2 The statistics of performance during the game

《Rosies Walk》		Project-based Games	
Research time		4 weeks (8 lessons)	
Grouping situation		Group A	Group B
Number of participants		20	20
Discussion situation	Attitudes	9	7
	Theme	8	5
	Interaction with teachers	7	3
Group leader	Familiarity of roles	7	2
	Familiarity of picture book	8	3
	Organization & leadership	8	2
Times of roles consultations		4	1
Making plans		7 (shown in Figure1)	0
Roles arrangement		9 (shown in Figure2)	2 (shown in Figure2)
Tasks arrangement		8	4
Implementation		7	3
Performance of the show		8	4

In order to study and analyze the differences of the final show between the two groups, the personnel allotment for each role task (such as director, actor/actress, narrator, dresser, props preparation, scene preparation, script collection), and the time allocation for each link (such as discussion, planing, preparation, practice, show), in the course of the project, were tracked and counted. The results were shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3, respectively. The percentage in Figure 2 was the ratio of the number of

people on the task to the number of entire group, and the percentage in Figure 3 was the ratio of the time spent in the link to the total time of the project.
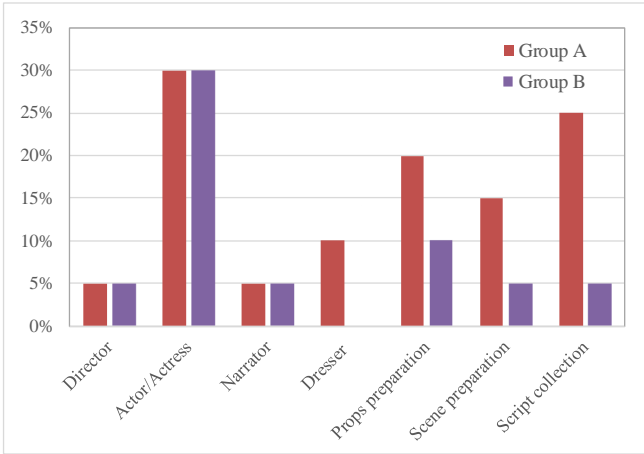

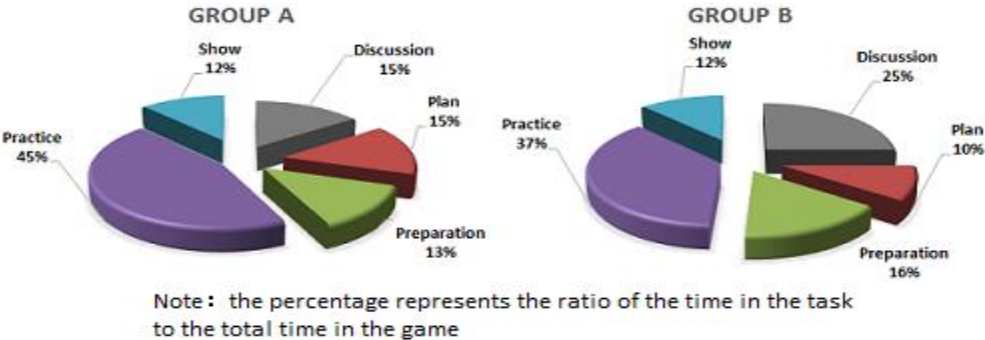Figure 2. The comparison of the assignment for tasks in the game

Note：the percentage represents the ratio of the time in the task to the total time in the game

Figure 3. The comparison of time allocation in the game

Discussion and Conclusions

Through the case analysis of the two groups, the key behaviors and the problems was summarized.So how do the study had been solved or avoid these problems from a grouping perspective? Considering that the current grouping is based on the group of children, it was not the most effective way to consider the children's wishes. So what was the most effective grouping? What type of young children would be more in forming a group? In this way, the social relationship of the class had been analyzed. Based on the above problems, an open questionnaire was designed ,the children could choose their favorite team members, the purpose was to understand young children like and what kind of friends were in the same group games, such as well, or the personality was bright and clear. Then, based on the selection of

children's interviews, the author carried out statistics and processing of data, and mapped out the overall picture of the class relationship and the cross-selection of the class children based on the statistics.

Children's grouping and class social relations

In this the game situation in Children's games was analyzed and arranged .Discovered that the game was affected by grouping.

When asked about the way children were grouped, the teacher's answer was the same -- grouping by class. Whether the author asked after the grouping, examined the effect of this way of grouping, as well as the large children's view of the grouping, the teachers all reflect the effect of grouping does not take into account the follow-up and young children.

Grouping by class is the easiest and fastest. But it's not the most effective.There is no attention to individual differences in children in this way. The young children floated around in groups,outside the edge of the group, not participated in the discussion of the group could often see ; Or the team members had a specific problem that made deeper. Visible grouping was closely related to group activities, without using scientific grouping could easily lead to the game team members lack a sense of accomplishment, and thus more foiled their willingness to participate in the project.

In kindergartens, there was little interest in the natural selection of favorite game areas. Therefore, if the interrelationship among children could be fully considered , each project team would be made more cohesive, and the game effect was more obvious, and children could play more effective games together. After the grouping, the teacher could only by their generally promote the work of the game, to assign a leader of the team, and less interference inside the team task allocation, most of the work by the team leader within the group activities. This could easily lead to overwork of the group leader. It was necessary to listen carefully, clarify the requirements of the teacher, and organized the team members to complete the project. It could also lead other groups to pass the buck. This required the teacher to assign tasks to each type of team member during project design, and developed a separate evaluation mechanism to allow all members of the team to participate in the project.At the same time,the child's level of play was affected by the number of groups.

From the perspective of social relationship diagram shows the result of this class kindergarten was located in the center circle and the outer circle the number of people were relatively few, most of the children in the middle of two layers of hierarchy (popular character envelops and general character envelops).The ratio of central characters to each other is not very high. From the results of the social graph, we can see that there are three people in the center of the class. This is not consistent with the author's expectations, and the author anticipated that the central characters would be more likely to choose each other. The interaction diagram shows that the central characters prefer to select the young children in the middle

layer as group members.In order to understand the reasons for the children's choice group members, the author designed an open question in the interview record, so that the children can choose the reasons for selecting the group members while selecting the group members. "He is my friend and we are well" is one of the reasons young children are most valued when selecting a group member, according to the survey. The second is "he" and "he's smart." Thus, children are a major factor in selecting group members.

It could be seen that the social relations between the team members could affect the communication and discussion within the group Impact the implementation of the whole project. When grouping children, the author suggests that should refer to the class society.Make sure that each member of the group had a member of his or her favorite group and balance class.The class was popular with young children and peripheral children, so that each member could feel a sense of belonging within the group, and also ensure the harmony of the group atmosphere.

Build the Role-structure for children in Project-based games

The study tried to draw a clearer picture about Key Behavior and Role Task, intending to see the resulting effect on Role-Structure in this research, and we wondered, would the Project-based Games be better when the role tasks and key Behaviors matched?

We constructed a relatively complete theory of Role-structure in our research based on what we did in the case study of 105 children. And we described the role structure model from three perspectives: role, behavior, and task.It was shown in the Figure 4.
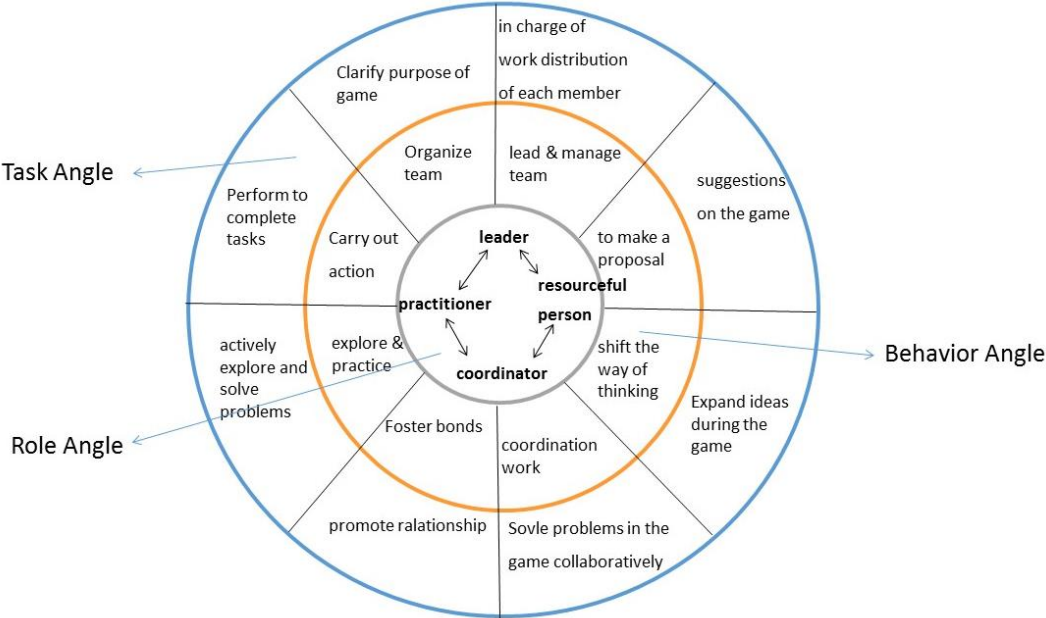

Figure 4. Models of Role-structure

The role: There are at least four key roles: leader, mastermind, coordinator, and practitioner. And they are

in the green circle in the center as you can see.

The behavior: a successful team will reflect the eight key features in the project, and they are the orange circle right in between: Organizing a team, leading and managing a team, making a proposal, etc.

The task: It stipulates and specifies what should be accomplished by each role in the execution process of the entire project. And we computed eight of them and they are in the biggest red circle.

The personalisation of the Models of role-structure

Ideally, to guarantee any task being accomplished accurately and quickly, all of these individual elements in this diagram would be seen all together, but not necessarily.The role-structure Model would be formed naturally when these three aspects were integrated automatically on their own.Would this work better if incorporated in a realistic situation?

The body design of the model was carried out in this section. Before the game, the learning content and laid out role task and key behaviors was designed . they were shown in the Table 2&Table 3.

Table 2 Project task & Mission Support

	Project task	Mssion support
initial plan	choose theme	Determine the theme & purpose of the picnic
	Plan	Determine the content、draw the task
	make a plan	Determine the time and task
medium-term planning	identify and collect resources	Determine the resources
		collect resources
	assigning task	assinging task to everyone
	planning the layout	Layout
the late review	Activities	
	project evaluation	peer reviewing
		teacher evaluation

Table 3 Role task & Key behavior

Project phase	Role task	Key behavior
Entire	for the picnic theme,purpose,content and other members of the discussion	Organization
		discuss
	speak freely in the discussion, express their idea When there is disagreement,coordinate the relationship	proposal

between members,to avoid the phenomenon of quarrel and marginalization

innovate

coordinate

Plan

Decision

Learning content design:The theme of this project was "picnic". And the project was divided into three stages. Then each stage was furthermore decomposed. After decomposing the task of the project clearly, the corresponding mission support was made as shown in the table.role task and key behavior:Each role has various tasks at different stages of the project. Therefore, we demonstrably designed the role task and key behavior of the project phase and chose the initial plan as an example to explain the specific details of the design.two teams were chosen as an example to explain the design of the model.There were ten children selected randomly from the senior grade of a kindergarten in each team.

The first successful team had 6 boys and 5 girls, and it had the best division of duties, after discussion, they picked their leader and the leader began to assign the task to every child, then the children began to set the tables and pick flowers to decorate the table, two children got food ready, and gave it to the waiter and waitress.and finally all the children enjoyed the food together.The second successful team had the best implementation of the plan, the children drew everything they needed to do. They drew down whom they wanted to be with and the leader concluded all the things they needed to do.They prepared together: putting on clothes, preparing tables and chairs, making the drinks and foods ready.Finally, they invited friends to enjoy the meal together.

Conclusions and prospect of research

In this study,research topics were from a line of teachers' practical problems, from the classroom observation summed up the model, the application strategy was put forward, and a return to the classroom experiment verification, the results of the study was available. Based on the role of children's game,the models of structure were proposed , pointed out that a successful project team need which member of the role, which is the key members of the group behavior, and these roles need to undertake the task team. for teachers in the infant group provides reference. Also according to the character of models structure learning tasks, roles and corresponding problems list, points out that the teachers in the project design needs to be targeted for different role assignments, so that every child can effectively participate in the project process from the project exercise their various aspects ability in learning. Using the interactive discourse analysis research method, the observed group word fragments were analyzed, and draw the interactive graphic, sums up the successful team members of interaction between team members and failure, and the role of structure model is obtained. The use of this method is a reference for other researchers.

This study put forward the models of role-structure of project-based games and provided new ideas and methods for teachers to design the project. However, it is still necessary to continuously test and verify, especially in other subjects. In different disciplines, the application of research will be alter and complete. it will also help to make the model more common.Under the premise of each course standard improve the students' learning. Due to the small number of children of carrying out the game class from this study cases, observed experimental study were gone through half a semester time, with the effect of model confirms that still lack a long-term investigation. Moreover, the improvement of children's ability is also a long-term process, which requires follow-up and feedback. All this needs further improvement.

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SURREALISM IN CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS—BASED ON ANTHONY BROWNE'S GORILLA

Wu Xiaoyuan

Abstract

Surrealism was an important artistic movement in the last century. Anthony Browne, English master of children's picture books, is well-known for his surrealistic style. Through analyzing the application of surrealistic elements in his masterpiece Gorilla, the present paper attempts to demonstrate the utilization and influence of surrealism in Children's picture books and the future development of surrealistic picture books.

After giving a general description of surrealism and Anthony Browne's surrealistic picture books, the paper focuses on a rather thorough analysis of Gorilla: its creation of metaphoric characters, such as the strong and gentle Gorilla representing an ideal father; its arrangement of surrealistic details, inspiring sense and sensibility; its symbiosis between image and text, blending logic into fantasy; its themes of positive and negative orientation, mainly criticizing the deterioration of parent-child relations and advocating the cathartic imagination of children.

The paper then deals with the children's special ability to understand and accept surrealistic picture books and their positive influence on the physical and psychological growth of children.

Finally, the paper points out three dimensions of the future development of surrealistic picture books of children: stronger integration of image and text, reality and virtual reality; greater attention to details, helping children obtain more sensual and sensible experience; deeper probe into reality, preparing children for the real world.

Key words: Anthony Browne; conscious; dreamlike; Gorilla; image; picture book; reality; sbuconscious; surrealism

Anthony Browne and surrealism

Since the beginning of surrealism, there have appeared two styles of painting—absolute realism and super realism. The latter demonstrates subtle details and recognizable scenes and objects, which, however, dispensing with the natural structure and distorted in a dreamlike way, are integrated into something in the dream, in an attempt to produce subconscious images uncontrolled by consciousness through the application of Freud's unconsciousness theory (Wang Hongyuan, 2000). Anthony Browne's series of picture books, starting with Through the Magic Mirror published in 1976, are typical of the surrealistic style.

Surrealistic expressions in picture book Gorilla

Published in 1983, Gorilla has established Anthony Browne's reputation as English picture book master ever since. In addition to winning the Kate Greenaway Medal, the Dutch Silver Pencil Award and getting listed among the top ten yearly picture books by the New York Times, it has now been translated into 14 languages (Lu Guojie, 2015).

Gorilla describes a little girl Hannah who aspires for her father's love, anthropomorphizing a gorilla and showing the gap between ideal and reality through dramatic contrast and composition.

Metaphoric characters and dreamlike scenes

Yvonne Duplessis (1988) regards "dreamlike" as a surrealistic technique. In view of Anthony Browne, the gorilla owns two conflicting characteristics: extremely strong but gentle, hence the most crucial metaphorical character—incarnation of the ideal father who Hannah yearns for.

Dreams are carriers of surrealistic imagination. Once Hannah can not get satisfied in reality, she escapes its dilemma and ventures into the subconscious land to express her longings and engage in omnipotent wonder journeys.

Details—sense and sensibility

Anthony Browne is good at describing details. As "active readers", Children are quick to observe the characteristics of details. For instance, while her father has no time to accompany her, Hannah sits alone in the corner of the empty drawing room, with only the television light covering her world, her shadow growing a tail and wild animal images appearing on the large unlighted wall paper; in addition, there are Hannah's books, Father's newspapers, oatmeal boxes, light switches, wall decorations, table lamps, and even the portrait of Chaplin and adapted painting of Mona Lisa…. These numerous surrealistic details, carefully arranged, are interestingly significant.

Symbiosis of image and text—fantasy and logic blended

One of the features of picture books is to arrange text and image together to interact and complement each other to achieve incredible effects. In Gorilla, Anthony Browne makes full use of this feature and gives readers full experience of picture book reading.

On one page, Hannah says she wants to go to the cinema, naturally resulting in the simple text "so they did." However, what follows such an ordinary statement is a big screen and gorilla on the next page, instantly catching readers' eyes, an exemplary surrealistic approach. On another page, when they feel hungry and decide "we'll eat", the gorilla is offered a dish of bananas, quite a logical fantasy with regard to the habits of primates.

Subjects—approving and criticizing

After the First World War, people were eager to jump out of the long psychological depression, hence the birth of dream-building surrealism as a breakthrough point. Sarane Alexandrian (1982) regards that surrealism intends to express a kind of "black humor." Nevertheless, Anthony Browne's surrealistic picture books keep to some extent metaphorical, funny and satirical elements, reduce such weird themes as chaos and death, and introduce some active and positive meanings and connotations.

In the perspective of idealism and realism of surrealistic picture books, Gorilla's themes can generally be divided into two aspects.

On the one hand, there are the themes of criticizing the deteriorating parent-child relations in reality. Hao Guang Cai (2016) states that Gorilla is the best example of the theme of "fantasy ends where the parents appear." In view of the development of children, to overlook children's needs will bring about the psychological insecurity, detrimental to the establishment of healthy views of life, value and world. On the contrary, interdependent and harmonious parent-child relationships will contribute to the building of warm and sweet family atmosphere and the solidifying of the family link, which will prepare children to face the future challenge of life with greater courage.

On the other hand, there are the themes of encouraging and approving children's subconscious expression and imagination. Anthony Browne points out repeatedly that children perceive the world more or less in a surrealistic way. Although it is often the last resort to pin hopes on dreams in the face of cruel reality, Anthony Browne still insists the rationality of children taking refuge from reality in dreamlike scenes as a way of subconscious expression, subtly encouraging children readers to imagine actively and give full vent to their expectations unmentionable in daily life, leading them to be more optimistic, cordial and active through the catharsis of negative feelings and experience of positive feelings.

Surrealistic picture books and children's development of cognition and emotion

Physiological characteristics and development

During the enlightenment of the strongest desire for knowledge, Children are usually curious about life and world. The right side of brain of children is image brain, more disposed to deal with sensual, perceptual and intuitional images (Li Lun, 2015). Researches also indicate that visual images can stimulate the growth of right brain. Reality-based surrealistic picture books boast vivid subjects and characters, original and whimsical composition, exaggerated imagery and delicate techniques, hence able to be memorized and retained by the growing right brain of children, motivate their ingenuous imagination and creativity, and accelerate the development of children's right brain.

Psychological characteristics and development

Adopting the perspective of children, surrealistic picture books combine reality with virtual reality and teach children in particular ways: making them understand better what picture books present, enriching their recognition and association of nature and world and enhancing their study efficiency; helping them perceive and experience life more directly, effectively fostering the development of their aesthetic psychology and strengthening their power of feeling, appreciating and creating beauty; relieving them of the sense of fatigue in reading, promoting their reading interest in relaxation and activating their creative thinking. In addition, through reading weird and fantastic episodes, children, disadvantaged against adults, can temporarily escape from the forbidden world imposed upon them by adults and enjoy the dreams in the virtual brave new world, gaining the positive emotions of relaxation and happiness and draining the depressed and negative emotions (Zheng Li, 2014).

Dimensions of development of future surrealistic picture books

Stronger integration of image and text, reality and virtual reality

Surrealistic picture books feature the smooth switching of actual and virtual scenes. Characteristic of unrestrained imagination, surrealistic drawing and description tend to express subjective impressions of the author and present the impossible things through images and texts. Authors of surrealistic picture books should integrate reality and virtual reality through the free switching and natural transition between dream world and real world, expressing themes and content in a more effective way, conforming more closely to children's cognitive levels and advance their development of imagination and creativity.

Greater attention to details

With observant eyes, children can increase their abilities of understanding and reasoning in the process of personal visual experience and thinking. It is unnecessary for surrealistic picture book authors to deliberately magnify some points or reduce some details for fear of children's lack of the ability to discover. In fact, children possess an ability of observation beyond the imagination of adults. Therefore, the

surrealistic presentation of details can not only enrich the content of picture books, give a mysterious color, but also help children acquire sensual and rational experience different from that of adults.

Deeper probe into reality to prepare children for real world

Surrealism originated from an intellectual movement of reforming society and life, acknowledging the objective existence of the world and shouldering the responsibility of solving the major problems of life. For younger preschool children, surrealistic picture books should be based on animism, trying to keep close to their cognitive ability and protect their imagination. For other children, picture book authors should respect their sense of participation and empathy, probing deeper into reality, imparting more thought and inspiration to the approach of combining reality with virtual reality, providing better media of discharging negative emotions and getting them more actively and positively prepared for the real world.

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INTEGRATION OF KINDERGARTEN COURSES OF PHYSICAL AND ARTISTIC EDUCATION—BASED ON HK AND TAIWAN PRACTICES

Wu Xiaoyuan

Abstract

Compared with the traditional departmental teaching, the methodology of preschool course integration is relatively new in the Chinese mainland. The present paper explores the characteristics and methods of integrating kindergarten courses, and suggests effective ways of improving and promoting preschool course integration.

The paper first defines the concept of preschool course integration as the integration of different disciplines to assure more fruitful experiences in early childhood. Then, it introduces and analyses two mature and successful practices of integration of courses of physical and artistic education in Hong Kong and Taiwan, showing how children get inspired through such practices.

Further on, it demonstrates the features and advantages of course integration of physical and artistic education for preschool children, highlighted in education through enjoyment and all-round growth, which will contribute to lay the foundation of their life study and future development. It also points out the challenges due to course integration for would-be preschool teachers, necessitating new perception of preschool education and more professional training.

Finally, it puts forward suggestions for improving kindergarten course integration in the Chinese mainland, including the role change of preschool teachers from a traditional judge of authority to the active organizer and participant of integrated activities inside and outside kindergartens, the active introduction and assimilation of advanced preschool teaching methods from abroad, and the dynamic balance between integrated education and departmental teaching.

Key words: all-round development; artistic education; course integration; creative; enjoyment; experience; kindergarten; music; physical education; preschool

Definitions of concepts

Course

There have been various definitions of courses. Generally speaking, the concept of course consists of three aspects: as disciplines, as objectives or projects, as experiences (Zhang Hua, 2000). The course in the present paper is defined as the experiences acquired through tutorial guidance, as well as the experiences obtained automatically by students.

Course integration

The pedagogical concept of course integration advocates integration of different disciplines, demonstrating the organic whole of human being, education and life (Li Wenling and Shu Hua, 2011). The theme-based teaching present in many kindergartens nowadays is one of the forms of course integration, which intends to break through the barriers between disciplines and makes students study in a more meaningful and interesting way.

Course integration of preschool education

As the Guidance Outline of Kindergarten Education of China points out, the content of kindergarten education can be relatively divided into five areas--health, language, society, science and art, all of which penetrate each other, boosting through different angles children's development of emotion, attitude, ability, knowledge, skill, etc (Education Department of PRC, 2014). Kindergartens tend to establish teaching themes from life and practice and attempt to find the effective connection to facilitate children's development in various areas.

Integration of courses of physical and artistic education and examples

Kindergarten courses

In the practice of kindergarten education, as far as the course of physical education is concerned, there is unlimited possibility of exploration for preschool children, who are naturally active and energetic, and interested in tapping the inner world and feeling the outer environments with the sense organs. As for the course of artistic education, the melodious music and rhythmic dance, like the body expression, are the international language and one of the effective ways of self-expression employed widely by preschool children. Through the integration of courses of physical and artistic education, Kindergartens aim to activate children's potential of physical and artistic expression, improve their learning quality and foster their innovative spirit.

A Creative Integrated Curriculum of Movement and Music for Young Childrenand (Hong Kong Education College, 2008), sponsored by the education development fund of Hong Kong Education College, exemplifies the integration of courses of physical and artistic education. During the exercise of oceanic journey of the body theater, Teacher Wong Shu Sing, presenting the background of the sea with multi-media and producing the sound effects of sea wave drums, tambourines and horseshoes, leads the children to use the scarves as parts of the body and express themselves dramatically and creatively according to the start and stop of the music and drums. Meanwhile, the exercise includes symbolic games, such as using the animal gloves to represent the fierce sharks, the wide-spread blue oblong scarves the sea bed. Piccaso once said, "Everyone is an artist". In the field of the physical and artistic expression, creative situations lure children into the world of imagination and everyone becomes a talented dancer. In this way, both teachers and children achieve a better appreciation of physical and artistic education and turn the tendency of merely teaching or learning one or two dances into the exploration and activation of limitless potential of children.

Specialized preschool courses

The establishment and application of specialized preschool courses are fundamental for the cultivation of kindergarten teachers. The college curriculum of preschool education major should meet with the theoretical and practical requirements of kindergarten education.

I took an optional course of preschool physical and artistic education named Children's Physical Fitness and Rhythm when I studied as an exchange student in the preschool department of Pingdong University of Taiwan in 2016. Unlike its counterparts in the Chinese mainland, usually the conventional in-classroom inculcating patterns, it uses the dance room and no textbook. Blending into physical education elements of rhythmic music, such as the Indian music with lineal melodies, the teacher encourages the students to interpret various movements in accordance with different tunes, rhythms, speeds, dynamics and tones, and synchronize the advance and freeze-frame of movements with the start and stop of the music, which is also known as the "sculpture game." In the process, the students explore their body expressions against the music background, observe the characteristic movements of others, and realize the complex movement patterns in cooperation with partners. During the exercise of clap and turn, the teacher, abandoning the cramming and lecturing pattern, makes the students turn sideways four times to face and make the acquaintance of four new friends. Such specialized preschool course can apply to the kindergarten morning exercise, or the practical teaching of dramatic and physical education.

At the end of each class, the students relax against the slow and soft music totally different from the music previously played, lying at leisure on the floor, turning around, sitting up, and stretching for the last

time. As a result, the students feel reinvigorated both in body and mind. In the final exam, the students are required to design and try to implement the kindergarten teaching programs based on self-composed rhythmic dances and oriented to improve body movements.

Characteristics and significance of course integration

Characteristics of integration of courses of physical and artistic education

According to its application in preschool education in Hong Kong and Taiwan regions, the integration of kindergarten courses of physical and artistic education features rationality in structure, elasticity in form and applicability in practice, and all of these characteristics are closely interrelated. Rationality is demonstrated in the great attention the integration of courses of physical and artistic education pays to the agenda of all-round development and the process in which preschool teachers or children are scientifically targeted and instructed; elasticity is demonstrated in the flexible and lively ways of teaching adapted to the specific programs of integration of courses of physical and artistic education and the resulting pleasant atmosphere of learning athletics and arts; applicability is demonstrated in the teaching materials that can be generated, applied and expressed instantaneously through the integration of courses of physical and artistic education.

Significance of course integration: education through enjoyment and all-round development

It is very important for the training of preschool teachers and children to integrate courses of physical and artistic education. According to the studies of children's psychology, children develop in an all-round and coordinated way, hence no absolute boundaries existing between various disciplines in the kindergarten. Course integration corresponds to the operation of problem-solving physiological mechanism of brain, which generates a sophisticated information network to identify patterns. In this sense, all kinds of course integration are important and worth promoting among preschool students and children.

About children and kindergarten education

Early childhood education lays the foundation of life study. Health is the most precious fortune of life. It is the sacred responsibility of preschool teachers and parents to cultivate good health habits, skills and attitudes in children.

Meanwhile, early childhood education is the basis of all-round growth. The purpose of early childhood curriculum of Hong Kong is summarized as follows: to cultivate children in all-round development of morality, intelligence, physique, sociality and aesthetics, preparing them for future life; to arouse their learning interest and build correct learning attitude, laying a sound foundation for future study (Hong Kong

Curriculum Development Council, 2006). The fundamental principles of preschool education of Taiwan state that body movements and health, cognizance, language, society, emotion and aesthetic feeling connect and interact with each other for growing children (Education Department of Taiwan Region, 2012). Among Hong Kong's six development objectives of preschool children are physical fitness and health, and arts, and among Taiwan's six abilities of preschool children are body movements and health, and sense of beauty. These objectives and abilities characteristic of pertinent disciplines can be integrated to produce creative and comprehensive performing arts and experiences, which serve as preschool children's ways of self-expression and communication, provide taste and excitement of creative work, and nurture bodily-kinesthetic intelligence and musical-rhythmic intelligence of preschool children (Howard Gardner, 1983).

Creative body movements, the exploration of interrelation between body and music included, are a new field of physical education (Xu Zhuoya, 2015). Through integration of courses of physical and artistic education and combination of music elements and body movements, there can emerge a brand-new area of body music courses, which, by way of integrated teaching and ingenious leading, will stimulate preschool children's imagination and creative potential while exercising, and produce characteristic body language and positive and pleasant emotions, hence boosting all-round development of body and mind of preschool children and realizing education through enjoyment.

About would-be preschool teachers and their upbringing

Preschool children need to be immersed in cultural environments constructed by preschool teachers with specialized theoretical knowledge and practical experience. From the viewpoint of course integration, would-be preschool teachers should be trained in proportion to the above-mentioned significance of course integration. In other words, their professional cultivation should include course integration. They should gradually learn to perceive preschool courses in a totally different way from that adopted by traditional departmental teaching, and intentionally apply the concepts and principles of course integration to the program designing, simulation teaching and field instruction.

Suggestions for kindergarten course integration
Establishing correct views of knowledge and curriculum
According to Jean Piaget's constructivism, knowledge can be constructed subjectively, and teachers are no longer authorities and judges, but helpers and promoters in students' sense-making. Therefore, preschool teachers should learn from integration of diversified disciplines, and, getting rid of the so-called "ultimate objectives" and "common knowledge", assimilate traditional and advanced teaching methods at

the same time to build vivid situations of course integration. Only in this way can they leave more time and opportunities to children, exploiting their self-consciousness and potential, and engage them to explore and express, to cooperate and react, and to actively put what have been learned into use.

4.2 Imbibing experience of course integration from abroad

The still prevailing spoon-feeding pedagogy tends to drag teachers and students into deadlock on the campus around the Chinese mainland. Teachers at home should strive to assimilate course integration experience from abroad, such as the above-mentioned Taiwan and Hong Kong practices. Once the advanced foreign concept, experience and methodology melt into the local cultural backgrounds, a brand-new pattern of kindergarten teaching will emerge, bringing about appropriate and scientific course integration of preschool education, full of enjoyment and vitality, movement and creativity.

Harmonizing and balancing departmental and integrated teaching

There are wide-spread discussions about departmental teaching and integrated teaching among teachers. Since departmental teaching tends to be divorced from the living conditions of preschool children, it is difficult for them to apply what have learned into real life. In comparison, integrated teaching lays greater stress on sociality and practicability, hence more comprehensive and all-round. However, there is no absolute boundary between departmental and integrated teaching, which calls for a dynamic balance. In preparing teaching programs, preschool teachers should take into account of both advantages of course integration and systematic instruction of disciplines, trying to coordinate disciplinary systems and concepts into course integration, instead of totally neglecting or arbitrarily replacing them.

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