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**EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION AND CARE:
CHALLENGES AND
PERSPECTIVES**



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“EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES”

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KORÇË, 2021

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THEATRE AS A NEED AND RIGHT OF CHILDREN FOR A CULTURAL ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

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La riflessione pedagogica sul rapporto tra teatro e infanzia, tra arte ed educazione ha radici lontane. Conflittualità, alleanze, equilibri talvolta precari e visioni innovative hanno caratterizzato la storia degli ultimi tre decenni del Novecento ad oggi, da cui emerge, al di là dell'eterogeneità e della pluralità di prospettive, il bisogno del piacere del teatro, dello stupore e delle emozioni dei linguaggi dell'arte.

Parole-chiave: infanzia, teatro, educazione, didattica

Pedagogical reflection on the relationship between theater and childhood, between art and education has far-reaching roots. Conflictuality, alliances, sometimes precarious balances and innovative visions have characterized the history of the last three decades of the twentieth century to the present, which shows, beyond heterogeneity and the plurality of perspectives, the pleasure of theater, of amazement and emotions of the languages of art.

Keywords: childhood, theater, education, didactics

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Introduzione

Parlare di “partecipazione culturale attiva” in relazione all’infanzia significa considerare la politica culturale come un lungo progetto di educazione alla cittadinanza, sviluppando una visione culturale che considera l’infanzia soggetto attivo e non oggetto-consumatore-fruttore.

Questa riflessione che lega teatro e cultura, educazione e cittadinanza ci mette davanti alla sfida di una formazione integrale della persona, considerando la pluralità di appartenenze, di contesti, delle diverse dimensioni del proprio sviluppo e benessere, quella cognitiva, emotiva, relazione, progettuale.

I contesti in cui agiamo, come professionisti dell’educazione e della cultura, sono sempre più caratterizzati da molteplicità di abilità, culture, linguaggi, intelligenze, generi, saperi che richiedono una continua riflessione sulle condizioni dell’infanzia, sulle modalità di comportamento di bambini e bambine, sui loro desideri e sull’immaginario da cui essi derivano.

Nel dibattito attuale sull’infanzia e sul pieno sviluppo dei

Introduction

Talking about “active cultural participation” in relation to childhood means considering cultural policy as a long project of education for citizenship, developing a cultural vision that considers childhood an active subject and not an object-consumer-user.

This reflection that links theater and culture, education and citizenship puts us in front of the challenge of an integral formation of the person, considering the plurality of belongings, contexts, the different dimensions of one's development and well-being, the cognitive, emotional, relationship, planning.

The contexts in which we act, as education and culture professionals, are increasingly characterized by a multiplicity of skills, cultures, languages, intelligences, genders, knowledge that require continuous reflection on the conditions of childhood, on the ways of behaving children. and girls, about their desires and the imaginary from which they derive.

In the current debate on childhood and the full development of boys and girls, the reflection on the importance of art and creative languages seems to be placed in

bambini e delle bambine, la riflessione sull'importanza dell'arte e dei linguaggi creativi sembra essere collocata in secondo piano dalle istituzioni educative e da un sistema mediatico più attento alle preoccupazioni legate all'uso dei dispositivi digitali e sui loro effetti nello sviluppo infantile.

La divisione tra chi considera le nuove tecnologie come un pericolo e chi le ritiene un'opportunità, tra coloro che le accusano di inibire lo sviluppo della socializzazione, di favorire l'isolamento e di scoraggiare i giochi creativi, e chi le ritiene, al contrario, strumenti per sviluppare abilità, stimolare la motivazione e la cooperazione ha allontanato da un'analisi approfondita delle esperienze artistiche e creative, in modo particolare quelle teatrali, che troppo spesso vengono contrapposte a quelle cosiddette multimediali, nell'opposizione tra vecchi e nuovi media, senza però attirare particolare interesse da parte del mondo adulto.

Talvolta anche l'errata denominazione di "nativi digitali" rischia di sviluppare un senso di insicurezza e inadeguatezza negli adulti, che temono di non avere le conoscenze,

the background by educational institutions and a media system more attentive to concerns related to use of digital devices and their effects on childhood development. The division between those who consider new technologies as a danger and those who consider them an opportunity, between those who accuse them of inhibiting the development of socialization, fostering isolation and discouraging creative games, and those who consider them, on the contrary, tools to develop skills, stimulate motivation and cooperation has moved away from an in-depth analysis of artistic and creative experiences, especially theatrical ones, which too often are opposed to so-called multimedia ones, in the opposition between old and new media, without, however, attracting particular interest from the adult world. Sometimes even the wrong naming of "digital natives" risks developing a sense of insecurity and inadequacy in adults, who fear that they do not have the knowledge, skills and languages to face the "new needs" of this "new childhood". Having imprisoned it in this stereotypical label has exempted educators and parents

le competenze, i linguaggi adeguati per affrontare i "nuovi bisogni" di questa "nuova infanzia". L'averla ingabbiata in questa etichetta stereotipata ha esonerato educatori e genitori dalla comprensione della complessità e delle caratteristiche di una generazione che chiede di essere educata e guidata ad una cittadinanza digitale che si integra con la dimensione culturale ed artistica, capace di aprire all'immaginazione, all'invenzione e alla costruzione.

Ai media, vecchi e nuovi, gli esperti così come la cultura popolare attribuiscono caratteristiche che minacciano la fantasia dell'infanzia, impoveriscono la qualità delle relazioni e del gioco, oltre ad alimentare paure sui pericoli e su nuove forme di dipendenze.

Sheery Turkle richiama alla responsabilità educativa: «Non è il momento di rifiutare la tecnologia, ma di ritrovare noi stessi. Questo è il momento per rimetterci in riga, per riconoscere le conseguenze non volute di tecnologie a cui siamo vulnerabili, per utilizzare appieno la capacità di recupero che ci è sempre appartenuta. Abbiamo tempo per apportare correzioni e ricordare chi siamo veramente:

from understanding the complexity and characteristics of a generation that asks to be educated and guided to digital citizenship that integrates with the cultural and artistic dimension, capable of opening up to the imagination, to invention and construction. To the media, old and new, experts as well as popular culture attribute characteristics that threaten the imagination of childhood, impoverish the quality of relationships and play, as well as feed fears about dangers and new forms of addictions.

Sheery Turkle calls for educational responsibility: «It is not the time to reject technology, but to rediscover ourselves. This is the time to get back on track, recognize the unintended consequences of technologies to which we are vulnerable, and make full use of the resilience that has always belonged to us. We have time to make corrections and remember who we are: creatures with a history, with complex psychology and complicated relationships - creatures led to carry out even risky conversations with candour, looking our interlocutor straight in the eye»¹. These dichotomies, which lead to incentivize or deny some

creature con una storia, con una psicologia complessa e rapporti complicati-creature portate a sostenere con candore anche conversazioni rischiose, guardando dritto negli occhi il nostro interlocutore»¹. Queste dicotomie, che portano ad incentivare o negare alcune esperienze rispetto ad altre, ci allontanano dal riconoscimento delle reali capacità dei bambini e delle bambine, delle infanzie, al plurale, nelle molteplici diversità, a partire dalla loro capacità di vivere relazioni e scambi tra bambini e adulti fondate sulla costruzione dei significati da attribuire alla realtà. «Se non si adotteranno relazioni intergenerazionali improntate a un maggior ascolto situato dei bambini, rispettoso di questa loro insopprimibile differenza che si esprime attraverso le loro pratiche quotidiane, quell'industria dei consumi tanto demonizzata e temuta finirà nel bene e nel male per essere una delle poche in grado di rispondere a questo bisogno di riconoscimento dei bambini, o a farlo meglio dei genitori»². Gli attuali scenari richiedono capacità di immaginazione, di invenzione e connessione, volontà di costruire e di comprendere in modo

experiences over others, distance us from recognizing the real abilities of boys and girls, of childhoods, in the plural, in the many diversities, starting from their ability to experience relationships and exchanges between children. and adults based on the construction of meanings to be attributed to reality. "If intergenerational relationships are not adopted based on a greater situated listening to children, respectful of their irrepressible difference that is expressed through their daily practices, that much demonized and feared consumer industry will end up being one of the few able to respond to this need for recognition of children, or to do it better than parents"². Current scenarios require the capacity for imagination, invention and connection, the will to construct and understand in a critical and multidisciplinary way, to face the challenges posed by personal and social transformations and by a violently colonized imagination. "A world that can be explained even with bad reasons is a familiar world; but vice versa, in a universe suddenly stripped of illusions and lights, man feels himself a stranger, and this exile is without remedy,

critico e multidisciplinare, per affrontare le sfide poste da trasformazioni personali e sociali e da un immaginario violentemente colonizzato. «Un mondo che possa essere spiegato sia pure con cattive ragioni è un mondo familiare; ma viceversa, in un universo subitaneamente spogliato di illusioni e di luci, l'uomo si sente un estraneo, e tale esilio è senza rimedio, perché privato dei ricordi di una patria perduta o della speranza di una terra promessa. Questo divorzio tra l'uomo e la sua vita, tra l'autore e la scena, è propriamente il senso dell'assurdo»³. Il rischio di sentirsi estranei ed esiliati, in un mondo senza illusioni né luci, come lo descrive Camus, è quell'inquietudine che attraversa i contesti educativi ed artistici da lungo tempo, alla ricerca di strategie e strumenti, linguaggi ed immagini per descrivere la realtà e metterla in discussione. Nel periodo in cui le pratiche e le riflessioni su teatro e scuola, sul rapporto tra pratica artistica e vita sociale iniziano ad analizzarne, con particolare profondità e vivacità, le caratteristiche e le potenzialità estetiche ed educative, Emanuele Luzzatti proponeva questa visione:

because it is deprived of the memories of a lost homeland or the hope of a promised land. This divorce between man and his life, between the author and the scene, is properly the sense of the absurd »³. The risk of feeling strangers and exiled, in a world without illusions or lights, as Camus describes it, is that restlessness that has been going through educational and artistic contexts for a long time, in search of strategies and tools, languages and images to describe reality. and question it. In the period in which the practices and reflections on theater and school, on the relationship between artistic practice and social life, begin to analyze, with particular depth and vivacity, the characteristics and the aesthetic and educational potential, Emanuele Luzzatti proposed this vision: "Today that many veils, and not only theatrical ones, have definitively fallen, we are not satisfied with seeing the theater through the keyhole, much less the reality. We want to look things in the face, touch them with our hands. We want to face the problems, live the contradictions, discuss together and get out of the too comfortable and suffocating sanctuaries of art.

«Oggi che molti velari, e non solo teatrali, sono definitivamente caduti, non ci accontentiamo di vedere attraverso il buco della serratura il teatro, né tantomeno la realtà. Vogliamo guardare bene in faccia le cose, toccarle con le nostre mani. Vogliamo affrontare i problemi, vivere le contraddizioni, discutere insieme e uscire dai troppo confortevoli e soffocanti santuari dell'arte. Il teatro che tentiamo di costruire giorno per giorno, e in cui crediamo, è aperto da tutti i lati, esposto a tutti i venti, offerto alla partecipazione di tutti»⁴. Dopo 40 anni vissuti tra alleanze e disalleanze tra scuola e teatro, tra riforme, indicazioni e protocolli talvolta ancora incompiuti, questo obiettivo conserva l'urgenza di un bisogno educativo ed artistico ancora molto attuale. Il teatro e l'educazione dovrebbero condividere, proseguendo in questa riflessione, la dimensione dell'utopico, come intenzionalità trasformativa rispetto all'esistente. L'immaginazione ne diventa allora la poetica, non da contrapporre alla ragione, o da intendersi come artificiosa e illusoria fuga dal reale. Il teatro che educa non è necessariamente un teatro di tipo "sociale",

The theater that we try to build day by day, and in which we believe, is open from all sides, exposed to all winds, offered to the participation of all»⁴. After 40 years lived between alliances and dis alliances between school and theater, between reforms, indications and protocols sometimes still unfinished, this goal preserves the urgency of an educational and artistic need that is still very current. Continuing in this reflection, theater and education should share the dimension of the utopian, as a transformative intentionality with respect to the existing. The imagination then becomes its poetics, not as a contrast to reason, or to be understood as an artificial and illusory escape from reality. The theater that educates is not necessarily a "social" type theater, on which artists, teachers and experts still animate heated comparisons. It is rather a "theater as research": a theater that converges towards the "pedagogical" in being a reflection on the present and on the crucial issues of the political and at the same time in being able to overturn the norm, what is known, the sense common. It helps us to see the

su cui ancora artisti, docenti ed esperti animano accesi confronti.

È piuttosto un "teatro come ricerca": un teatro che converge verso il "pedagogico" nell'essere riflessione sul presente e sulle questioni cruciali del politico e allo stesso tempo nell'essere capace di capovolgere la norma, ciò che è noto, il senso comune. Ci aiuta a vedere le ombre e le sfumature della complessità, contrapponendo alla monodimensionalità la pluralità delle dimensioni e delle possibilità. È un teatro che, in senso ampio, offre all'attore, allo spettatore, alla comunità, un'opportunità preziosa di formazione, un'esperienza positiva di condivisione con gli altri, una possibilità di crescita umana oltre che culturale. Il teatro è qualcosa che possiamo "fare" e non soltanto "guardare", che può essere vissuto in contesti formali ed informali, scolastici ed extrascolastici e che ha bisogno, quindi, di spettatori capaci di essere creatori attivi di significati e non fruitori passivi di un prodotto.

Teatro e infanzia: un teatro che si fa "piccolo"?

In un'intervista rilasciata a "il Venerdì di Repubblica", Bruno Tognolini condivide una riflessione sull'infanzia che parte dalla critica

shadows and nuances of complexity, contrasting the plurality of dimensions and possibilities to one-dimensionality. It is a theater that, in a broad sense, offers the actor, the spectator, the community a precious opportunity for training, a positive experience of sharing with others, a possibility of human as well as cultural growth. Theater is something that we can "do" and not just "watch", which can be experienced in formal and informal contexts, school and out of school and therefore needs spectators capable of being active creators of meanings and not passive users of a product.

Theatre and childhood: a theatre that becomes "small"?

In an interview with "il Vaticano di Repubblica", Bruno Tognolini shares a reflection on childhood that starts from the criticism of "infantile miming", to reiterate that "they must be given miniatures, not amputations or cuts. Toys or soft toys are shrunken things of the world, that is, adapted to small hands, but they are not shortened things. The toy car is a machine, not a half machine. In the same way, the arts that are offered to children -

allo "scimmiettamento infantile", per ribadire che «bisogna consegnar loro miniature, non amputazioni o tagli. I giocattoli o i peluche sono cose del mondo rimpiccolite, ossia adattate a mani piccole, ma non sono cose accorciate. La macchinina è una macchina, non una mezza macchina. Allo stesso modo le arti che si offrono ai bambini- racconti, illustrazioni, musica, poesie- devono dire cose piccole ma non monche, piccole ma integre. Devono mantenere la complessità del mondo adattandola a orecchie minute»⁵. Ci sollecita ad una visione che supera la tendenza all'idealizzazione dell'infanzia, per riconoscere quella reale, concreta, che rischia però di essere pensata e controllata dentro a binari costituiti da modelli di soggettività adulte, caratterizzati talvolta da pratiche di protezione, negazione o sottrazione dalla realtà. «Accade pertanto, che al bambino -prigioniero dentro una pelle non sua, definita e interpretata da altri, all'interno degli ambienti protetti a lui dedicati (famiglia, istituzioni del tempo libero, mondo massmediale) - venga di fatto interdetto qualsiasi autonomo rapporto con il mondo reale, ossia con la verità, l'originalità,

stories, illustrations, music, poems - must say small but not incomplete things, small but intact. They must maintain the complexity of the world by adapting it to small ears»⁵.

It urges us to a vision that overcomes the tendency towards idealization of childhood, to recognize the real, concrete one, which however risks being conceived and controlled within tracks made up of models of adult subjectivity, sometimes characterized by practices of protection, denial or subtraction from reality. "It therefore happens that the child - imprisoned within a skin not his own, defined and interpreted by others, within the protected environments dedicated to him (family, leisure time institutions, mass media) - is effectively banned from any autonomous relationship with the real world, that is, with the truth, originality, unpredictability that mark the experience of the world of life"⁶. The theater can then become a possibility for children to reappear in a representation freer from conformism, where corporeality and play, fantasy and creativity, thought and languages are harmoniously correlated.

l'imprevedibilità che contrassegnano l'esperienza del mondo della vita»⁶. Il teatro può diventare allora una possibilità per l'infanzia di ricomparire in una rappresentazione più libera da conformismi, dove corporeità e gioco, fantasia e creatività, pensiero e linguaggi siano armonicamente correlati. Questo apparente punto fermo della relazione arte-educazione ha radici lontane: il teatro muore e rinasce mille volte, costruisce e disfa il suo rapporto con la scuola nel suo continuo conflitto tra teatro del fare (come saggio di fine anno) e teatro da vedere (una sorta di sussidiario teatrale), tra rassicuranti conferme e forze innovative, caratterizzando la storia degli ultimi tre decenni del Novecento ad oggi. Sembra trovare la sua identità più stabile in corrispondenza alle crisi che attraversano la città, la famiglia e la scuola, senza però riuscire a realizzare un sistema integrato di esperienze, modelli e strutture. Da *Animazione, Teatro professionale per l'Infanzia e la Gioventù*, al *Teatro Scuola* fino ad arrivare al più recente *Teatro per le nuove generazioni*, questa relazione arte-educazione esprime certamente una sua fragilità, ma allo stesso

This apparent fixed point of the art-education relationship has distant roots: the theater dies and is reborn a thousand times, builds and undoes its relationship with the school in its continuous conflict between theater of doing (as a year-end essay) and theater to see (a sort of theatrical subsidiary), between reassuring confirmations and innovative forces, characterizing the history of the last three decades of the twentieth century to today. It seems to find its most stable identity in correspondence with the crises that are going through the city, the family and the school, without however being able to create an integrated system of experiences, models and structures. From *Animation, Professional Theater for Children and Youth*, to the *School Theater* up to the more recent *Theater for the new generations*, this art-education relationship certainly expresses its fragility, but at the same time also peculiarities to be posed once again in evidence⁷: that of representing the community theater in its plurality; to express the potential to establish projects and relationships with the arts, cultures, technologies, social life of the country; to

tempo anche peculiarità da porre ancora una volta in evidenza⁷: quella di rappresentare il teatro della comunità nella sua pluralità; di esprimere la potenzialità di instaurare progettualità e relazioni con le arti, le culture, le tecnologie, la vita sociale del paese; di costituire il luogo dell'altro da sé, attraverso il tempo sospeso dell'emozione, della riflessione, del rispetto dei punti di vista. L'infanzia a cui si rivolge non è quella mitizzata e spensierata che vive in un a sorta di età dell'oro, non è quella a cui si nasconde "il male", la sofferenza, l'aggressività, non è quella a cui l'attore sembra obbligato ad ammiccare, o ad "infantilizzarsi" per facilitare la comprensione del messaggio. A teatro, nello spazio protetto della finzione, in un'esperienza vissuta individualmente ma insieme alla confortante presenza degli spettatori vicini, si possono infrangere tabù, sperimentare impulsi crudeli e paure, vivere e condividere emozioni. «Partendo da ciò che conosce, cioè dalla sua enciclopedia, lo spettatore colma gli spazi bianchi, gli interstizi, collega gli indizi, imbastisce scene-fantasma, crea mondi possibili»⁸.

constitute the place of the other from oneself, through the suspended time of emotion, reflection, respect for points of view.

The childhood to which he addresses is not the mythologized and carefree one that lives in a sort of golden age, it is not the one to which "evil", suffering, aggression is hidden, it is not the one to which the actor seems obliged to wink or "infantilize" to facilitate understanding of the message. In the theater, in the protected space of fiction, in an experience lived individually but together with the comforting presence of nearby spectators, one can break taboos, experience cruel impulses and fears, live and share emotions. "Starting from what he knows, that is, from his encyclopedia, the viewer fills the white spaces, the interstices, connects the clues, sets up ghost-scenes, creates possible worlds"⁸.

Therefore, speaking of theater in education does not mean speaking of an educational tool, in the sense of instructive and moralistic, which reproduces simplified visions of the adult world for childhood, nor of a utilitarian theater, object of study of a knowledge transmitted in the

Parlare quindi di teatro in educazione non significa parlare di uno strumento educativo, nel senso di istruttivo e moralistico, che riproduce visioni del mondo adulto semplificate per l'infanzia, né tantomeno di un teatro utilitaristico, oggetto di studio di un sapere trasmesso nel sistema tradizionale della scuola.

È un incontro, quello con il mondo dell'educazione, che valorizza il teatro nella sua dimensione estetica, creativa e provocatoria nei confronti della realtà.

Diventa allora anche un'educazione *in* teatro, che non si ferma a chiedersi quali sono i vantaggi per l'attività didattica e per l'incremento dei saperi degli studenti, ma lo sceglie come luogo e linguaggio per lo sviluppo delle loro molteplici dimensioni (cognitiva, affettiva, emotiva, estetica, progettuale...).

Non è un teatro per la scuola, non è una scuola che relega il teatro allo spettacolo di fine anno o ad un evento culturale estemporaneo e straordinario né che delega soluzioni preconfezionate ai problemi della classe. È una consapevole alleanza tra contesti educativi e teatro, che si concretizza in un riconoscimento delle diverse

traditional system. of the school. It is an encounter, the one with the world of education, which enhances the theater in its aesthetic, creative and provocative dimension towards reality. It then also becomes an education in theater, which does not stop to ask itself what are the advantages for didactic activity and for the increase of students' knowledge, but chooses it as a place and language for the development of their multiple dimensions (cognitive, affective, emotional, aesthetic, planning ...).

It is not a theater for the school, it is not a school that relegates the theater to the end-of-year show or to an extemporaneous and extraordinary cultural event, nor that delegates pre-packaged solutions to the problems of the class. It is a conscious alliance between educational contexts and theater, which takes the form of a recognition of the different pedagogical identities, in the crossing of complex and fragile scenarios, in the experimentation of processes that produce imaginary, as well as knowledge. "If the school / theater relationship is inserted into the broader theme of the relationship between school and art

identità pedagogiche, nell'attraversamento di scenari complessi e fragili, nella sperimentazione di processi che producono immaginari, oltre che saperi. «Se il rapporto scuola/teatro va inserito nel tema più ampio della relazione tra scuola e arte in generale, la fruizione di uno spettacolo teatrale è il momento in cui una forma artistica fa irruzione nel processo educativo e si pone come esperienza diversa, provocatoria, suscitatrice di stupore, in grado di alterare gli abituali schematismi cognitivi»⁹. Chiedersi quindi se il teatro possa essere educativo o meno è come interrogarsi sulla natura della città di Zenobia. «È inutile stabilire se Zenobia sia da classificare tra le città felici o tra quelle infelici. Non è in queste due specie che ha senso dividere le città, ma in altre due: quelle che continuano attraverso gli anni e le mutazioni a dare la loro forma ai desideri e quelle in cui i desideri o riescono a cancellare la città o ne sono cancellati»¹⁰.

Il teatro come spazio e tempo delle relazioni

Anche se il rapporto tra scuola e teatro è ancora caratterizzato da un accordo poco solido, nonostante le pratiche e le riflessioni abbiano

in general, the enjoyment of a theatrical performance is the moment in which an artistic form bursts into the educational process and presents itself as a different, provocative experience, arousing astonishment, capable of altering the usual cognitive schematisms"⁹. Therefore, asking oneself whether the theater can be educational or not is like asking oneself about the nature of the city of Zenobia. "It is useless to establish whether Zenobia is to be classified among the happy cities or among the unhappy ones. It is not in these two species that it makes sense to divide cities, but in two others: those that continue through the years and mutations to give their shape to desires and those in which desires either manage to cancel the city or are canceled from it.»¹⁰.

Theater as a space and time for relationships

Even if the relationship between school and theater is still characterized by a not very solid agreement, despite the practices and reflections have begun to constitute a system in the 1970s, and that between theater and family is weak and certainly not considered a pedagogical priority, we can try

iniziato a costituire un sistema negli Anni Settanta del secolo scorso, e quello tra teatro e famiglia sia debole e certamente non ritenuto una priorità pedagogica, possiamo tentare di recuperare e attualizzare quelle strade aperte in passato, superando conflitti e indifferenze.

Il teatro di cui ha bisogno l'infanzia non è quello per cui Pinocchio marina la scuola e vende l'abbecedario. Come sosteneva Giorgio Testa, agli inizi degli Anni Ottanta, «il libro di Collodi ci presenta dunque un conflitto scuola-teatro assolutamente irresolubile e senza sfumature e mediazioni di sorta: o si va a scuola o a teatro, o si conserva e capitalizza l'abbecedario o lo si vende (anzi svende) per i quattro soldi che costa il biglietto di uno spettacolo; teatrante e maestro di scuola tirano il bambino in due direzioni opposte, l'uno con promessa dell'effimero piacere immediato, l'altro con la prospettiva di un bene futuro e duraturo»¹¹. Non è nemmeno quello che deve porsi come alternativa alla fruizione dei dispositivi digitali, come fu per la televisione, considerando a priori il suo potenziale creativo in risposta alla fantasia infantile soffocata dalle tecnologie e sentendosi comunque

to recover and update those paths opened in the past, overcoming conflicts and indifference.

The theater that childhood needs is not the one for which Pinocchio skips school and sells the ABC. As Giorgio Testa argued, at the beginning of the Eighties, "Collodi's book therefore presents us with a school-theater conflict that is absolutely irresolvable and without nuances and mediations of any kind: either you go to school or to the theater, or you keep and capitalize on the abbecedary or you sell it (or rather, sell it off) for the cheap price a ticket to a show costs; theatrical and school teacher pull the child in two opposite directions, one with the promise of ephemeral immediate pleasure, the other with the prospect of a future and lasting good"¹¹. Nor is it what it should be an alternative to the use of digital devices, as it was for television, considering a priori its creative potential in response to the childish imagination suffocated by technologies and always feeling at a disadvantage in its attractive power. It is not by winning these competitions that the theater acquires a cultural legitimacy, by trying to please the teachers on the

sempre in svantaggio nel suo potere attrattivo. Non è vincendo queste competizioni che il teatro acquisisce una legittimazione culturale, provando a piacere da un lato agli insegnanti, puntando sulla facilità e sui contenuti istruttivi, dall'altro ai bambini e alle bambine, spesso sconosciuti "nativi digitali" da conquistare con effetti speciali.

Forse, se lo chiedessimo insolitamente a Michelangelo Pistoletto, ci risponderebbe con il manifesto del "Terzo Paradiso", invitandoci alla responsabilità di costruire nuovi immaginari. «Cos'è il Terzo Paradiso? È la fusione fra il primo e il secondo paradiso. Il primo è quello in cui gli esseri umani erano totalmente integrati nella natura. Il secondo è il paradiso artificiale, sviluppato dall'intelligenza umana, fino alle dimensioni globali raggiunte oggi con la scienza e la tecnologia. Questo paradiso è fatto di bisogni artificiali, di prodotti artificiali, di comodità artificiali, di piaceri artificiali e di ogni altro genere di artificio. Si è formato un vero e proprio mondo artificiale che, con progressione esponenziale, ingenera, parallelamente agli effetti benefici, processi irreversibili di

one hand, focusing on ease and educational content, on the other hand to boys and girls, often unknown "digital natives" to be conquered with special effects. Perhaps, if we asked Michelangelo Pistoletto this unusually, he would answer us with the manifesto of the "Third Paradise", inviting us to the responsibility of constructing new imaginaries. «What is the Third Paradise? It is the fusion of the first and second paradise. The first is that in which human beings were totally integrated into nature. The second is the artificial paradise, developed by human intelligence, up to the global dimensions reached today with science and technology. This paradise is made up of artificial needs, artificial products, artificial comforts, artificial pleasures and every other kind of artifice. A real artificial world has been formed which, with exponential progression, generates, in parallel with the beneficial effects, irreversible processes of degradation and consumption of the natural world. The Third Paradise is the third phase of humanity, which is realized in the balanced connection between artifice and nature. Third Paradise

degrado e consunzione del mondo naturale. Il Terzo Paradiso è la terza fase dell'umanità, che si realizza nella connessione equilibrata tra l'artificio e la natura. Terzo Paradiso significa passaggio a uno stadio inedito della civiltà planetaria, indispensabile per assicurare al genere umano la propria sopravvivenza. A tale fine occorre innanzi tutto ri-formare i principi e i comportamenti etici che guidano la vita comune. Il Terzo Paradiso è il grande mito che porta ognuno ad assumere una personale responsabilità nella visione globale. Il termine paradiso deriva dall'antica lingua persiana e significa "giardino protetto". Noi siamo i giardinieri che devono proteggere questo pianeta e curare la società umana che lo abita. Il simbolo del Terzo Paradiso, riconfigurazione del segno matematico dell'infinito, è composto da tre cerchi consecutivi. I due cerchi esterni rappresentano tutte le diversità e le antinomie, tra cui natura e artificio. Quello centrale è la compenetrazione fra i cerchi opposti e rappresenta il grembo generativo della nuova umanità»¹². è una completa e intensa esperienza, mantiene memoria dell'esperienza. «L'opera d'arte»,

means passage to an unprecedented stage of planetary civilization, indispensable to ensure the survival of mankind. To this end, it is first of all necessary to re-form the ethical principles and behaviors that guide common life. The Third Paradise is the great myth that leads everyone to assume a personal responsibility in the global vision. The term paradise derives from the ancient Persian language and means "protected garden". We are the gardeners who must protect this planet and take care of the human society that inhabits it. The symbol of the Third Paradise, a reconfiguration of the mathematical sign of infinity, is made up of three consecutive circles. The two outer circles represent all diversities and antinomies, including nature and artifice. The central one is the interpenetration between the opposite circles and represents the generative womb of the new humanity»¹².

This generative womb must also be nourished and made to grow through the theatrical experience, which is both aesthetic and surprising, when it is capable of being an irruption into the ordinary perceptive process, a change of

Questo grebbo generativo va nutrito e fatto crescere anche attraverso l'esperienza teatrale, che è allo stesso tempo estetica e sorprendente, quando è capace di essere irruzione nel processo percettivo ordinario, cambiamento di prospettiva, quando riconnette processi cognitivi ed emozionali, finzione e realtà e lo fa in modo inatteso, quando sa ricreare quella relazione che lega l'attore e lo spettatore, come corpo unico che fa esperienza dello spettacolo. È proprio questa esperienza dello spettacolo, percepito, compreso, vissuto che scardina la concezione del teatro come arte effimera, per farlo diventare durevole grazie alla pluralità di stimoli che caratterizzano la visione e l'ascolto. Il linguaggio non verbale, coniugato col linguaggio simbolico, archetipico, permette a ogni età di entrare in relazione con la creazione artistica sulla base della propria storia, della propria esperienza, del proprio bagaglio di conoscenze. Percepire, "afferrare con i sensi", "prendere con i sensi" è una forma di comprensione, di piacere, di immedesimazione e interiorizzazione che contribuiscono a creare significati e sostiene Dewey,

perspective, when it reconnects cognitive and emotional processes, fiction and reality and it does so in an unexpected way, when it knows how to recreate that relationship that binds the actor and the spectator, as a single body that experiences the show. It is precisely this experience of the show, perceived, understood, lived that undermines the conception of theater as an ephemeral art, to make it lasting thanks to the plurality of stimuli that characterize vision and listening. Non-verbal language, conjugated with symbolic, archetypal language, allows any age to enter into a relationship with artistic creation on the basis of their own history, their own experience, their own wealth of knowledge.

Perceiving, "grasping with the senses", "grasping with the senses" is a form of understanding, pleasure, identification and interiorization that help to create meanings and memory of the experience. «The work of art», says Dewey, «precisely because it is a complete and intense experience, keeps alive the power to experience the common world in its fullness» Trying to overcome the conflicts and uncertainties that have

«proprio perché vivo il potere di sperimentare il mondo comune nella sua pienezza»¹³.

Provando a superare le conflittualità e le incertezze che hanno caratterizzato il complesso rapporto tra teatro e scuola, possiamo essere più sicuri nell'affermare che l'infanzia ha bisogno di adulti che amino il teatro, di insegnanti in cui siano radicate la cultura del teatro e una didattica dell'educazione teatrale. Ha bisogno di insegnanti e genitori che non "portino" la classe e i figli a teatro, ma che vadano insieme per costruire una relazione attorno ad un'esperienza condivisa. «Andare a teatro con la scuola, anche se iscritto nell'organizzazione e nel controllo dell'istituzione, comporta pur sempre un'interruzione del tempo feriale, una sospensione degli orari e dei doveri quotidiani. E ugualmente andarci con i genitori offre l'opportunità, come si è visto, di condividere con loro un'esperienza abbastanza straordinaria, in ogni caso non consueta. Ma ho l'impressione che, quando i bambini dicono "stare a teatro è come una festa", è partecipare a una festa, è fare una festa, si riferiscano a una

characterized the complex relationship between theater and school, we can be more confident in affirming that childhood needs adults who love theater, teachers in whom the culture of theater is rooted and a didactics of theatrical education. It needs teachers and parents who do not "bring" the class and their children to the theater, but who go together to build a relationship around a shared experience. «Going to the theater with the school, even if it is part of the organization and control of the institution, still involves an interruption of the working time, a suspension of schedules and daily duties. And equally going there with the parents offers the opportunity, as we have seen, to share with them a quite extraordinary experience, in any case not usual. But I have the impression that, when children say "being at the theater is like a party", it is participating in a party, it is having a party, they refer to a much broader connotation of festivity: that is, produced by a *communitas* founded on sharing an experience, on that being all together animated by a common spirit ... » The theatrical experience begins by crossing a

connotazione di festività molto più ampia: prodotta cioè da una *communitas* fondata sulla condivisione di un'esperienza, su quell'essere tutti insieme animati da uno spirito comune...»¹⁴.

L'esperienza teatrale inizia superando una soglia che consente di entrare in una sospensione, fatta di eccitazione e rilassamento, sorpresa e calma, fascinazione e paura. È una dimensione in cui l'adulto non è escluso, né al servizio del bambino, né, tantomeno, è controllore dell'ordine e del silenzio, ma vive il piacere di essere spettatore attivo capace di favorire nel bambino la possibilità di tale avventura, in cui è non è oggetto di socializzazione adulta, ma soggetto competente in grado di partecipare attivamente.

Abbiamo quindi bisogno tutti, bambini e adulti, di un teatro che rimetta al centro questa relazione, questa interazione affettiva e sociale, nella condivisione di uno spazio creativo che diventa il luogo di una comunità empatica, di una tensione tra individuo e gruppo, di un corpo collettivo capace di attivare scambi, di accrescere energie, di sentirsi parte di un vissuto comunitario.

threshold that allows you to enter a suspension, made of excitement and relaxation, surprise and calm, fascination and fear. It is a dimension in which the adult is not excluded, neither at the service of the child, nor, least of all, is the controller of order and silence, but experiences the pleasure of being an active spectator capable of favoring the possibility of this adventure in the child, in which it is not an object of adult socialization, but a competent subject capable of actively participating. We therefore all need, children and adults, a theater that puts this relationship, this emotional and social interaction at the center, sharing a creative space that becomes the place of an empathic community, of a tension between individual and group, of a collective body capable of activating exchanges, of increasing energy, of feeling part of a community experience.

Note

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- (11) G. Testa, *A scuola o a sentire i pifferi?*, in "Scena Scuola", Dicembre 1983, n. 0, p. 37, pp. 37-39.
- (12) Ci si riferisce al manifesto e al simbolo del Terzo Paradiso, che Michelangelo Pistoletto ideò nel 2003. La citazione è stata pubblicata in "Origami", n. 52, 3-9 novembre 2016, pp. 7-8. Si veda il sito <http://www.pistoletto.it> Cfr. M. Pistoletto, *Il terzo paradiso*, Padova, Marsilio, 2010.
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EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN AGED 0 - 4 AND SOCIAL SERVICES FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN IN THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

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Abstract:

This paper examines the early childhood development of children aged 0 to 4 years and the provided social services for parents and children in the Republic of Bulgaria. The family and its importance for children's development are considered.

Various changes in society shape the development of modern parenting. The dynamic changes in society present parents with ever new challenges in fulfilling their parental responsibilities. Nowadays, parenting is more compelling than before and is being increasingly under pressure from various influences, such as the media, public institutions, older family members, a person's own expectations.

Key words: families, early childhood development, society, children

This article confirms the importance of early childhood development for the future development of the child into a full person. The family as a social organism plays an important role for the development of the child's personality so that it can reach its full potential.

Research shows that a child's brain begins to develop in the prenatal period, which involves complex interaction of neural connections constructed under the influence of experience and the environment. In the early years of a child's life, these processes take place very quickly and they do not recur.

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They establish a foundation for such kind of development that will help children grow, learn and fully develop in their future life. The proper development of a child's brain in early childhood is supported through adequate nutrition, protection from violence and positive communication between the adult and the child, including early learning opportunities. [UNICEF, Early Moments Matter for Every Child, 2017, p. 1]

One of the legislation documents, in which the care of the state is described, is the Preschool and School education Act, where article 2 is related to the provision of conditions for early childhood development. [Preschool and School Education Act, 2020, p. 3]. Other important for Bulgaria, national and international legislation and policy documents contain the country's commitments to ensure a standard of care for children in early childhood and their families. Developing and implementing the policies for early childhood development in Bulgaria are part of the values and policies of the Member States of the European Union. They stem from the country's general commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment № 7 on implementing child rights in early childhood. [Methodological guide for the provision of the Service "Early Disability Intervention Through the Establishment of an Early Disability Intervention Centre"]. It is, therefore, important that national policies and research on the practice of quality care and education in early childhood should support the child's right to positive experiences in order to foster optimal brain development. In this relation, it is necessary to create a mechanism at the national level for inter-institutional understanding regarding early childhood development, which is oriented to all interested ministries and institutions. This mechanism should reflect the structural development of early childhood development policies, focusing on children's experiences during their development, assisting parents in positive parenting and answering the question of which activities best support the personality of the child to develop and reach its full potential.

Early childhood is one of the most important periods in human development and it is associated with the accumulated initial experience and impressions in distinguishing the accumulated basic skills, such as motor, speech, social, play, cognitive. Many experts define this early period of a

child's life as the "age of acrobatics" [Osterrieth, 2006]. Negative experiences in early childhood can slow down and even change the way neural connections are built in the brain. They can also impact negatively a child's ability to learn. For example, violence and neglect in early childhood can cause toxic stress that is prolonged and / or permanent, can negatively affect the formation of neural connections in the brain. [UNICEF, Early Moments Matter for Every Child, 2017, p. 3] The first months and years of a child's life play an important part in shaping the foundations for lifelong learning. The public believes that when children are young, they are unable to learn. In fact, early childhood is an important intensive period for acquiring basic knowledge and ideas about the world.

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, every child's need for a family where they feel safe and secure is a legal status. The right to have a family is fundamental to its development. [Article 18 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, https://www.unicef.org/bulgaria/sites/unicef.org.bulgaria/files/201809/CRC_bg.pdf]

"Early childhood" refers to the period from the child's birth to their enrolment in school, with some specialists and international organizations including the prenatal period of the child's development.

Assoc. prof. Buzov in his article "Early childhood and innovative practices in the training of pedagogical specialists" describes the organizational and structural distinction regarding the period of "early childhood" in Bulgaria, as "early childhood" is the period from the birth of the child to the age of three, and the second period called "preschool childhood" - from three to seven years of age. The first period is administratively managed by the health care system and the second period of the child's development by the education system. This differentiation of the child's development shows the lack of cross-sectoral policies for the child from their birth till their entry into the educational system.

In 2012, the Government of Bulgaria signed an agreement with the international organization UNICEF for the development of policies in the field of early childhood development. UNICEF Bulgaria's program "Let's grow up together. Workshops for parents" is successfully implemented, aiming to

support parents and caregivers of children in early childhood. The long-term goal of the program is to create a sustainable model for supporting parents of young children aged 0 to 4 years, as well as future parents. At the heart of the program is the understanding that parenting should nurture positive relationships between adults and children, contributing to the development of both children and their parents in developing parenting skills, knowledge and attitudes for good care, as well as to encourage positive communication with the child from their prenatal period of development. The unification of the state and international organizations working for the observance of children's rights around a unified vision for the development of integrated services and programs for children in early childhood and their families, leads to improving the provision of the necessary care and education to children at this early age.

Centres for Early Childhood Development have been recently opened in Bulgaria as a social service in the community. These services support parents of disabled and / or healthy children who receive comprehensive social, psychological and material support.

Bulgaria, as a party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, needs to make "early childhood" a top national priority, even more so based on the fortieth session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, held in Geneva in autumn 2015 with early childhood as the main theme, where it was recognized that quality is a value that is constantly evolving and negotiating between the parties.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child points out in its general comment № 7 of 2015 that young children have all the rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and that Member States must respect children as individual persons with their own rights and they should be accepted as active members of the families and societies to which they belong.

With the Law on Social Services Bulgaria regulates the provision, use, planning, financing, quality, control and monitoring of social services. One of the main activities described in it is "skills acquisition training". In this sense, social services could recognize "early childhood" as an activity, and apply a family-oriented approach to their work, covering all areas affecting

children's well-being.

It is necessary to seek and implement approaches to synchronize all activities related to the care, development, positive communication and education of the child in early childhood provided in social services in support of families, as well as training of parents.

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THE EDUCATORS' PERCEPTION OF THE CHILD, THE SERVICE AND PROFESSIONALISM IN THE DAYCARE CENTERS: KORCA CASE STUDY

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Abstract

This research, conducted in the Municipality of Korca, aims to know and analyze the perceptions of educators working in the two public nurseries in this city. Nurseries in Albania are administered by municipalities and are these institutions that also respond to the professional needs of the nursery staff. This study takes place in a phase of reflection on the service of nursery schools in Albania, where the profile of educators, in the last 5 years, is taking on another meaning from a more pedagogical than care perspective. In this regard, this case study of the two nursery schools of Korca aims to recognize and analyze the perception of educators, not only on their professional role within the service but also on the service of the nursery schools itself, the perception of the child, of families and the community, etc. The researchers intend to pursue this research for several years in the future to outline the historical trend of the meanings and physiognomy of nurseries, from the point of view of those who worked on it and gave their contributions.

Keywords: daycare center, educators, perceptions, education, early childhood, service

Introduction

This research follows the commitments that the University of Korca has made with the Municipality of Korca to support the two nurseries of this

city in the role of pedagogical coordinator. For four years, the University of Korca, the Department of Education, has been preparing educators for early childhood 0-3, through a two-year professional study program. Subsequently, our research takes its cue from the identification of the training needs of the educators in service in the two nurseries of the city, therefore designing training courses for their professional growth.

The Department of Education refers to the professional figure outlined in the report of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture on Competence Requirements in Early Childhood Education and Care.

Today, the Municipality of Korca has not yet approved a resolution to establish the needs of the municipal education area. Currently, 16 educators with different professional qualifications work in the two nurseries in the city of Korca, including educators and assistants.

Although for 4 years now the two universities in Albania, Korca University and Elbasan University, have been preparing educators through two-year study programs in "Early Childhood Education 0-3", still several municipalities in Albania continue to recruit nurseries educators without the appropriate qualifications. The new staff recruited and the stabilized one has non-homogeneous educational qualifications and diversified professional experiences.

Furthermore, even today in nursery schools some educators do not have a degree, but only a high school qualification. On the other hand, only the Municipality of Tirana has a real structured department of education, while the other municipalities, it seems that they still have a lot of work to do in this sector.

Through an agreement, the Municipality of Korca has entrusted the Department of Education of the "Fan S. Noli" University with the detection of the training needs of educational staff in nursery schools. Following the results of the research, the Department of Education will plan a professional development path, through different training courses, designed to respond to the training needs highlighted by educators. The main tool for detecting the educational needs of educators was the semi-structured interviews based on grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The research focused on

educators' perceptions of the various issues concerning their work.

The second stage of the research involves focus groups with the educators of the two nursery schools to investigate the issues that have to do with the quality of the service and professional growth. The next step of the research envisages the involvement of families receiving nursery services in focus groups to gather their perceptions about the service, the professionals working in the nursery and the vision that family members have for improving the nursery service. Focus groups with families are crucial to understanding their perception of daycare service, as well as their expectations regarding the service, beliefs about the development, education and care of the child in the first three years of life. This article will present only the finding of the first phase of the research, focused on the educators' perception of the service, the educators' conception and perception of the child within the nursery service and their perception of their training needs.

Conceptual background

Focusing on the quality of education in early childhood services means providing a social and cultural response to both the child, the in-service protagonist, and the entire developing community, especially families and the local area.

Quality in the educational context is co-constructed by the social actors involved and is a process through which educators and parents, first, gradually become aware of the education of the same child through constant comparison of educational ideas and choices.

There are various definitions of quality, identified by a group of researchers from the University of Pavia (Becchi, Bondioli, Ferrari) in the 2000s, that are attributed to a concept of positive meaning. Some meanings are as follows:

Quality as perfection, seen as the best possible degree of quality, defined as unique and unrepeatable

Quality is the achievement of defined standards, referring to how a service achieves the objectives set by national programs or by the service statute.

Quality as suitability for purpose refers to the process of sharing objectives, negotiated by internal and external users of the educational service without any reference to the pedagogical purpose of the nursery.

Quality in the transformational sense is understood as service improvement, always referring to the kindergarten educational project and the needs of children and families. These meanings indicate the concept of quality as dynamic, for which the realization of quality service is seen as an objective to be achieved through continuous monitoring and evaluation activities of materials, resources and processes implemented. (Bondioli, 2002).

According to Restiglian (2012), the educational plan of the nursery service is divided into different contents divided into various parts, where the idea of the service, the idea of the child, of the family, learning, professionalism and community are constitutive elements of the educational project. Referring to Restiglian, the semi-structured interview was also drafted as a tool for collecting data in this study, to understand, in the first phase, what is the idea of the service and the idea of the child that the educators of the two kindergartens nest have. What Restiglian indicates to us in this regard is the following:

Service idea. It consists in determining how management and operators qualify their service towards the outside but also the inside. The external qualification allows the community and users to know how one's service is conceived in terms of openness, relationships and attention to the needs of the territory, as well as continuity with other agencies. Internal qualification, on the other hand, makes it possible to describe the idea that operators give to the educational environment to their users (children and families).

Child idea. When planning in the educational field, one must have in mind an ideal to aim for, as well as having a clear idea of the object of investigation. Explaining the idea of a child allows operators to share the particular meaning given to their object (the child) in such a way as to guide subsequent designs. Knowing the object of study (and work) allows you to avoid behaviours and practices that disqualify this concept and also allows, in the course of work, to pursue the actions that lead to achieving the ideal you have, avoiding all this which otherwise makes you move away. For example, considering the child as a person moves educators to work with a self-determining subject, who has his own particular needs and who can change the subjects he comes into contact with. In the same way, thinking about

realizing a competent child in his or her fullness will lead to putting in place a whole series of paths and activities that make him autonomous and able to act competently.

Borghi, in the same line of thought as Restiglian, tries to bring back the importance of thinking of the child as a person with their own needs and their potential in terms of development but also as an active agent. Thinking about children means making sure that the greatest efforts and the best energies are directed to them, and we say this in two senses: on one hand, we must look at the current child with his needs and the opportunities of the moment in perspective. to continually offer him the best, on the other hand, we must also look to the future by asking ourselves repeatedly what the same child will need in a while, what is developing that deserves to be strengthened, what are the most appropriate stimuli to which from time to time in the time it can be subject and so on. In other words, "thought children" means an attitude and a repertoire of behaviours of educators who not only respond to current needs but also to future ones, who not only favour ongoing development but also know how to see potential, which gives an, on the other hand, they are attentive to the immediate needs of children, on the other they have an educational project in mind that knows with competence and firmness from time to time where to lead them. Thinking about children means not improvising but constantly reflecting on what you do and why you do what you do. It also means reflecting on the activities that are proposed to them. (Borghi, 2016)

In this direction, from what the various authors cited above also propose to us, referring to the quality of service that relies on the well-defined conception of this service and the protagonist subject that is the child, it was thought that the first phase of this research was to investigate how daycare educators understand the service, the child and later their educational needs. Then we bring the data collected during the first phase of the research, defining the methodology, the tool to arrive at the data analysis and the conclusions.

Methodology

The data was collected from a non-probabilistic sample of nursery school educators, referring only to the two nursery schools in the city of

Korca. The convenience sampling method was used for the ease of retrieving the subjects and the perspectives of planning follow-up research as well.

The research question that guided this study is: What are the perceptions of the staff of the two nursery schools in Korca about the service and their training needs to improve their service. We recall that the purpose of this research was to understand the educational needs of nursery school educators, referring to the Albanian context where the first university-level study programs for the training of educators for daycare centres for children aged 0-3 years, were started only in 2018. This lets us understand that even today, in the nursery schools in Albania, we find educators without adequate training to offer a quality service based on a pedagogical thought of care and education for childhood. Since the research was conducted with a small non-representative sample, in an isolated territory, this research remains only a case study.

Sample

For the interviews, 16 educators from the two nursery schools in the city were contacted. The sample of interviewees is made up of only female educators, of which only four of them have one to three years of experience in the role of educator and the other nine have more than three years of work experience as educators in the nursery.

Only 11 educators responded to the interviews from the total of 16 educators working in the two nurseries.

Sample (n=11)	Work Exp	Edu.
Educators(n=9)	<5 (n=6)	University degree (n=7)
Nanny (n=2)	>5(n=4)	Secondary School (n=2)
	Av.=4.7	without response (n=2)
	Max.=14	
	Min.=1	
	Mode =1	
	Median=4	

Procedures

A semi-structured interview was designed to investigate the educational needs of the educators of the two nurseries as well as the perception of the

child and the service of the nurseries. Unfortunately, the interview was transcribed and was applied in writing for institutional administrative reasons. This method of collecting qualitative data also influenced the reliability of the data. However, in the analysis of the data, it can be assumed that there is still a factor to consider, such as the lack of professional freedom and service flexibility. The interviews carried out with the educators of the two nursery schools were collected in writing.

The semi-structured interviews conducted with educators were designed to investigate three major areas:

- the idea of service, where a brief description of one's job, role and functions was asked;
- The idea of the child, asked to express their thoughts trying to define the concept of "children". From the answers given by the educators and the keywords they used, we can understand what they think about the child, development, care and education.
- Perception of the difficulties and training needs that educators have identified in their work.

For each interview session, we asked the educators if they had any proposals to improve the service, their knowledge of the child and their professional skills.

Data analysis

Referring to the research question and the three factors that this study had in focus: idea of the service, idea of the child and training needs, the educators answered as follows:

ServIdea	Serv.Needs	Child Idea	WCHImp.
rut.=6	infra.tools=4	child dev.=4	training child dev.=5
rut.AplPlay=3	Practice=1	difDevChild=2	
rut.PlanPlay=1	PlanPlay&infra=1	N.art.=6	N.art.=6
multivision=1	N.A=4		

Table 1. Service idea and child idea: perception of educators (N.art – non-articulated; Rut. – routines; AplPlay – games performed; PlanPlay – Games planned; Infra. tools – infrastructures and tools; Child dev. –child development; difDevChild – differences in child development; WCHImp. - improve work with children)

From the data collected, about the service in general, the keywords that characterize the responses of the educators converge in the concept of care understood more in more in terms of assistance than education; we find repeated the concepts of hygiene, nutrition, care, rest, basic needs, playful activities.

In educators' perceptions of the need to improve service, we find that most of them think that the only things to improve are the infrastructure and work tools. On this question, 4 of them did not give any answer.

When asked to define the child, to talk about the concept of the child guiding their work with children in the nursery, the educators, in general, highlighted the attention they have on the development of the child without going into details. From the sample interviewed, 6 of them did not articulate their answer and only two of them mentioned the concept of individual differences between children that they keep in mind during their work. In this regard, as far as their perception of training needs is concerned, only 5 of them express that they need to attend training sessions that concern the development of the child. In this regard, as far as their perception of training needs is concerned, only 5 of them express that they need to attend training sessions that concern the development of the child. While the other 6 educators perceive that they do not need the training to improve their knowledge about the child, his way of being, his development, his needs, etc. to improve the work that educators do with them.

Furthermore, other data that we find in the analysis of the interviewed sample are on the training of the interviewees, where we find that no educator has participated in training for professional growth. Also on this data, we must understand if there is any resolution in the policies of the Municipality of Korca that provides for the continuous training of professionals working in nurseries.

Instead, about the professional skills that an educator working in childcare services must-have, the educators have expressed general considerations, without giving specific indicative points in this regard.

Whereas, in the questions about the difficulties they face in their work, and the factors that influence making their work difficult, most of them did not answer. Only a few of them replied that, over time, the difficulties are

overcome. Three underlined that among the factors that contribute to creating difficulties in the work are the lack of didactic material, reduced budget for the needs of the nursery, and communication with families. Only one educator also expressed the lack of the psychologist as an actor that can contribute to facilitating the work of educators, both with children and families.

Conclusions

At this stage of the research, we can only say that there is still a need for further study, to better understand the educational needs of educators. We hope to obtain other data to be clearer on the educators' needs to plan training support for their professional growth, to contribute, in some way, to the quality of childcare services. The other phases of the research include focus groups with educators and families who bring children to nursery schools, to better understand the concept that the community has in general regarding the service of nursery schools. We also realized that there is a lack of a performance charter for the nursery service and standards for assessing the quality of the service. In this regard, it should be analyzed which are the guides drawn by the Municipalities to guide the service of the nursery schools.

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**THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN PROVIDING CARE AND
EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN 0-3 YEARS OLD BASED
ON THE PRINCIPLES OF THE CURRICULUM
FRAMEWORK**

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Abstract

The way teachers conceive their roles in terms of caring and educating children influences their pedagogical practices and interactions. "The curriculum framework and core curriculum in 0 - 3 years old early childhood" was designed to provide the key principles, practices, learning and outcomes in order to guide teachers working with children 0-3 years old.

Care and interaction with this age group is important. The way teachers manage time, space, activities and engage children has a significant impact in the cognitive, social and emotional development of them. So, beyond providing routine physical care, the role of the teachers includes facilitating the activities. When teachers include caring and educating children in their daily activities, it brings higher quality in terms of their practice.

In this study, 20 students of the program "Early Childhood Education", reflected on their roles and practices based on the principles set by "The curriculum framework and core curriculum for early childhood 0 - 3 years old", part of the curriculum in the the academic year 2020-2021.

The aim of this study is to explore how future teachers improve themselves by reflecting and creating different notions and beliefs about their role at work.

The study concludes by discussing findings, in view of professional development and policies that require reflection and good professional practice for teachers.

Keywords: child, teacher, care, education, professional development

The role of teachers in providing care and education for children 0-3 years old is a key component in terms of determining the quality-of-service children receive. Thus, beyond providing routine physical care, the role of teachers involves facilitating activities for this age group (Brehony, K. 2009, pp. 585-604).

The way children manage their time, space, activities and engagement has a significant impact on their cognitive, social and emotional development (Shonkoff, J. & Phillips, D. 2001, pp. 549.; Wortham, M. 2005, pp.78-98), therefore the daily practice of a teacher is quite important. This practice is influenced by the way teacher perceives nature, role, work, and abilities of children (Berthelsen, D., Brownlee, J., & Johansson, E. 2009, pp. 221.; Salamon, J.: Sumsion, F. & Harrison, F. 2015. pp. 273-288).

Taking into consideration the fact that children need to receive high quality education, because it has a great impact on their social, intellectual and physical development, assessing and evaluating the level of education and training of pre-k teachers is crucial and it remains one of the priorities of educational policies. (Davis, B.: Degotardi, S., 2015, pp.75-80).

Sustainable education encourages children to develop a comprehensive understanding of the world they live in. Displaying genuine and understanding, as stated in Howard, Gardner (1991)³, occurs when "students are able to obtain information, acquire skills and apply them flexibly and conveniently in a new situation and at least somewhat unforeseen".

Therefore, the development of lifelong learning skills requires the education to be seen as the development of the powers of reasoning and judgment and generally the intellectual preparation. This obligation to raise the standards for early childhood teachers necessitated the integration of Early Childhood Education programs at three faculties of education, one in the city of Korça.

During the academic year 2020-2021, the "Curriculum framework and core curricula for early childhood 0-3 years" became part of the program.

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https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265520954_Preschool_teachers'_view_on_learning_in_preschool_in_Sweden_and_Denmark.

Some of the critical thinking skills recognized by researchers are: (Potts, B. 1994, pp. 52-94.: Beyer, K. 1985, pp. 270-276).

- Reflection in the learning process
- Finding relationships between different kind of information
- Determining the importance and validity of information in terms of problem solving
- Promoting collaborative learning process
- Promoting the ability to apply concepts

The aforementioned skills assess students' perceptions of their role in the education and development process of children. Based on these aforementioned skills, the aim of this study is to explore how future teachers improve themselves by reflecting and creating different notions and beliefs about their role at work based on some principles such as:

- Every child is ready to learn from birth
- Equality
- Inclusion
- Integrated development and learning
- Learning through play
- Active participation
- Cooperation
- Autonomy, flexibility, and responsibility at the institutional level

These principles guide future teachers in terms of understanding the relationship between concepts; supporting a whole system as well as improving practice and professionalism with children.

Some of main topics of the curriculum for the first-year students were theories of human development, methods of observing children, creating play-based learning environments, principles of Psychology, In addition, during the second semester, students were able to participate in a professional internship monitored by the Municipality of Korca at two institutions in the city, encouraging participation in daily child care activities.

Based on a theoretical understanding of learning and the participation of socio - cultural theories on the importance of context and the social nature of learning, this study emphasizes teacher's perceptions of how children learn. There are three research questions that complemented the research

framework, ranked according to a 4-point scale (where 1 is the lowest rating and 4 is the highest rating of the situation or approach).

1. What situations and circumstances are characteristic of learning?
2. What are the prerequisites for teaching children?
3. How do you understand participation in relation to children's learning?

Each of these questions was identified through socio-cultural situations and approaches, based on previous research (Brostrom, S. 2012).⁴ Through Google Forms 20 first-year students reflected on early childhood teachers' perspectives on how they learn.

Below we are bringing the data from the questionnaire.

To identify the important elements that facilitate "Situations and circumstances characteristic of learning", students have assessed:

"The game where children and adults participate together" as very important, with 60%. Therefore, facilitating the learning and development of children, is achieved through building strong relationships. The ways teachers interact with children as well as socio-emotional development are of a great importance.

This assessment was followed by "Situations based on children's initiatives" and it was evaluated as important, with 60%. These situations contribute to the social development of children, which as another element of meeting the framework criteria, is assessed by 75% of students, as very important in order to emphasize the fundamental idea that learning occurs through social interaction with others. Thus, teacher should not be only a transmitter of knowledge, but cooperate and encourage children to be actively involved in the learning process and to discover the meanings of things.

Furthermore, "Activity driven by the goal to develop communication" receives the most attention with 95%; followed by "Creative activities, for example, painting and music", with 70%; followed by a ranking of other approaches, of which we would single out a 50% ranking of the questions:

⁴ <https://scholar.google.com/>

"Adults teach by explanation and modeling" and "Seeing what adults do and say".

Findings suggest that children create their own meanings to the surrounding world. They gain information through their active participation in daily activities with the help of adults. Findings, help us understand that language development comes because of cognitive development and thinking.

This requires:

- Educational content should stimulate the child's desire to learn.
- Content should be understood by the child.
- Educational content should stimulate curiosity for research.

In terms of the preconditions for children's learning, students have evaluated in the first three categories some aspects of the support that adults should give, their role in educating children and encouraging participation in active activities, with exactly 95%, 80% and 75%. Other categories also give greater value to the adult being actively involved in interactions with children.

Participation in relation to children's learning sought to identify what beliefs educators may have about the notion of participation and how these perceptions might affect practice, appreciating the importance of listening to the child's wishes and interests, encouraging them, creating conditions for children to be involved in activities and independent elections, as well as participation in joint activities, with 80%, 65%, 70%, 65%.

In conclusion, it can be stated that teachers are seen as participants in children's play, while the latter may be involved in other children's play. So, for future teachers it is important to be an active part of the group. In order to develop intellectually, emotionally, socially and morally, children must participate in regular, daily activities in order to create strong emotional connections.

The shaping of activities in early education should be driven by encouraging children through a physical, emotional, social and cognitive environment which promotes healthy development in all areas of

development.

Moreover, children need adult support to their choices. This can be considered as the right challenge according to development levels. A program that includes concrete teaching practices and strategies facilitates positive changes in their beliefs in line with constructivist practices. As students learn about childhood and education practices, they can use the knowledge to constitute their own beliefs and further apply these beliefs in practice. In addition, teachers support children understanding.

Thus, it is very important to practice beliefs that reflect a child-centered approach. If engaging in critical reflection becomes part of the teachers' practice, the goal of providing a classroom environment that fosters and supports children's learning and development can be achieved. Given the importance of this age group there is a perceived need that care and education services for children 0-3 years old should be supported by the development of staff with the right skills.

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THE IMPACT OF THE EDUCATORS ON MOTIVATION OF THE CHILDREN FOR CREATIVE BEHAVIOR

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Abstract

The creative development in children needs quite different placements in the educational activities. Due to that in the kindergartens is necessary to be developed exclusive programmes for inducing creativity. In the kindergartens is quite important to include special programmes. The role of the preschool institutions in inducing and developing creativity among children is possible to be developed completely, if the mandatory programme and activities make space for manifestation of the child s' creativity which are developed and realized in the regular activities frame.

The aim of our research of this work is to investigate the impact of the educator towards the motivation into children for creative realization of the planned activities as well as creative behavior in preschool institutions. It is well familiar that the earliest impact onto motivation among children are provoked by parents and family members as well, in other hand, when a child is starting the kindergarten their interest level and need to get in and took a participation in the planned activities, is affected by the educators' influence on them, the environment and by their peers. Even if is sometimes felt that the educators do not have a control over the intercourse for realization of the activities, the scientist look forward to educators as a key factors of power. The role of an educator is enormously huge, nonetheless it must be unobtrusive. It may help with the development of the creativity, to be more precise, its obligation is to offer help to the creative children to get familiar, to sense and become conscious about themselves, to help them to adjust to their friends, and last but not least important is not to sacrifice their creativity, do overcome the difficulties and failure. It is impossible to categorize a creative child only by its intellectual level, abilities, instead it is taken in to account other characteristics, for instance: advantage in activities, temperament, interest, the power of the ego and emotional stability, the level of self-control of the impulses, affection towards abstract thinking, self-awareness, self-focus, development of creative views, focus on spontaneous

creative problem solving situations, new experiences, independent thinking and reasoning, intuitiveness etc. The motivation is a product of internal urge for always being new, unique, original, witty, to look after unpredictable and unexpected answers, to create something new. To go through the process of realization of this the creative educator in the educational and creating activities for children through the process of motivation in going step by step:

- Is giving a problem and asks for questions to be asked
- Is giving proposals for discussion
- Is planning and making decisions independently
- Is showing up particular problems and gives suggestions
- Is defines boundaries and asks the decision from children

In nutshell, we can conclude that the essence of the educational creation operating on kindergarten children is the motivation as important psychological filter with whom countless researches show that the educators may have impact in the creative level.

Keywords: educator, motivation, children, creative behavior, educational activities.

Introduction

The conveyor of the motivation for creative behavior of the children is the educator, in other hand the child is holder of the group activity. Huge amount of researches shown that the motivational factors mark an important component of creation abilities of a person. In our work, the attention is put on the creative behavior of the children covering middle and larger groups in preschool institutions, more precisely kindergartens which aim is to provide support for development of kid's interests, abilities and talents. It is quite important to emphasize that the key role in this case have the environment and the individual activities. In other hand, the second question affecting the kindergartens is what happens with children considered as creative, those whose creativity is manifested trough activities and contents etc. The notion creativity in psychological encyclopedias of Ajzenk, Arnold and Mealy is defined as "an ability to deduce new relationships, to be produced unusual ideas and to diverge from the traditional model of thinking". (Enciklopedia of psychology, 1972:228). Successful creativity is based on identification of the essence of the material and the openness of the child through the

process of transformation of the facts which leads to creation new relations and materials to getting new knowledge (products).

Emboldening manifestation of creativity of children up to the impact of the educator

“All kids are born as genius, we are trying to subtract that in their first six years of life” Buckminster Fuller

For a manifestation of the kids' creativity in the kindergartens and educational suitable opportunities for a specific development during their stay in it is necessary to be given specific accommodations. The support is frequently seen in individualization of the activities going on in a group. The conditions for manifestation of the development of the creativity are bound in imperishable relationship with the methods and techniques for manifestation, development of creativity .The programs and courses for exercising of creativity in general are focused on development on the basic abilities, for instance: Intellectual operations, deductive selection, inductive selection, metaphorical thinking and transformation (Montgomery, D.1997:79-94). As much as a persons' experience is boosted and enormous its fantasy is more enlarged. Due to that child's fantasy is poorer and explained with lack of experience. “After the period of catching up experience, follows period of maturation and deposition claims Ribo”. The fantasy is an important provision of creative person. It means freedom of expressing which is quite different from the reality. Creation fantasy starts from the triad shape:

- Perception- automatically (needed) to be
- Isolation- separate details going on from others to be observed
- Association- distracted facts which is needed to be connected with the rest whit explicit and implicit data which till now were not associated, real or predicted impossible relations.

Motivation is the power source of the behavior and it consumes the attention, the aim and the purpose.

- Action: learning or other way of production- dynamic function;
- Achieving of the aim- regulation function;
- At the same time activation and processing variety of persons'

characteristics and abilities in direction towards realization of the goal in given circumstances. (Shafer, J.2005:54)

In general, the motivation of children is connected with “ the readiness, the wish and the obligation of a kid to take participation and to be successful in the process of performing activities”. The American psychologist Cattell (Catell, 1973) affirmed four motivational factors connected with the factor for succeeding. In nutshell those are: curiosity, self-confirmation, super-ego and constructiveness. The most important motives for learning of creation could be count in several basic groups:

- Need for succeeding
- Necessity for curiosity and independent thinking
- Necessity for differentness and new answers

Knowing the motives is giving opportunity for encouraging of a kid for realizing given task. With gifted children is needed to be asked for higher tasks due to succeeding a success of task with higher levels for them is quite attractive compared with achieving success on trivial or easy tasks. The feeling of a competence and self-determination have self-awardees effect induced by the urge for effective activeness on the environment and increasing of the autonomy of a person through accomplishing competences. (Arnaudova,V. Achkova Leshovska, E.1992). The contemporary role of the educator and his readiness for creation towards the children is counted in bunch of important questions connected with organization of educational and creative process where the educator is needed to be the organizational tool of the child's work, and less to be the one who talks, asks in other words to be the one unbreakable sources of knowing.(Stevanovic M.,2003:200). Moreover is needed to be creative, flexible, creation and research oriented. In its daily creative work, the educator, must be able to solve complex and enormous questions such as:

- The adaptability problem of the children in researching work and planned tutelage for creation;
- Motivation and interests for creational work and inspiration acting;
- Pedagogical leading-encouraging and helping in creation work; providing wide varieties of information, giving instructions, monitoring and going through the creation process when it's obviously needed.

- Identification of the abilities, latitude, needs and propensity of the children in the process of researching and creation etc.

Solving those complicated tasks are giving the educator successful motivation and manifestation of creative behavior among the kids with stay in the kindergartens.

Modeling creation attitude of the educator

“Brilliant ideas frequently come from crossing across the boundaries and seeking other areas, looking for new ideas and question Roger Fon Eke

The educator is the main developing mechanism of the creation process of children in the kindergartens in frames of every group. According to it, the educators' training for creation work with kids' is quite important, regardless of that our work is focused towards the kids of middle and higher group with a stay in at the kindergartens. Not only should the educators, the general preschool organization be implemented in creative vibes. The basic task of the educators must acknowledging the potential creation skills of the kids. Creative educator is encouraging and respectful child's latent potential. A creative educator is giving valor and respecting the creative emotions, is affording creation expression, following and studying their creative possibilities, creating atmosphere for creative work, is developing self-respect for independent work for research work. The realization is only possible when creation is nurtured, the educator must follow those principles:

- To inform each child for the results of the creative activities;
- To announce on time the topics for work;
- To use as an advantage the abilities of each child;
- Honestly to give commendation.

Rational and creation activity should be fulfilled by previously particular psychological condition like: mobility, motivation, transformation and reaction.

Moderation is the first condition. That is a permanent orientation which is giving space for conditions for implementing the creative vibe. With its attitude, the educator, should be oriented in increasing the level of motivation for creation work among the children. It will enable them to

understand that the real creation person is not the one who invents instead that is a person who discovers.

Mobility- is activating the whole -physical and psychical organism of a person.

Creation process is about a complete person, its psychical and physical power. The person with the creation is existing, existing is creating, that means it is giving it being and creating something new, that new is creating a new person, who is cheering up the new outcome and patent. That ennobles and motivates creation undertake.

Transformation- changes owing to the connection between the theory and practice in the creation process. Knowing has a power in creation work, it is not the main and deciding, but matters. Having talent is a key factor, but the fundamental in all is the work, giving in, dedication, and perseverance to create something new. (Stevanovic, M. 2003:68,69). In the process of the creation work will succeed those who:

Reacting- in the creation process is an individual act and experiencing it. That is the advantage in the creation process and effect; a person is planning consistently, combining, researching, changing, valuating and understands what does it mean to be new, original, witty and unusual. It is in persistent movement and action

- The ones who will know to precise and determine the aims needed to be accomplished;

- To define expected results;

- To sync all the objective and subjective opportunities;

- To define the aims;

- To go quickly on action for creation; and

- Everything has a limit- exceptional is the creativity.

The creativity is emphasized into children on each age level from preschool age who accomplish planned activities in creative perspective and attitude, motivated, encouraged and oriented by their educator.

Conclusion

Motivation is important assumption for effective creation process, in this state the organism is in readiness for accomplishing given creative task and finds itself in a state of tension and action. It can happen an increase or

decrease of the motivation depending on the final results and neurotic structure of each individual. One person failures affect de-courageous and only validation can move it this person forward to an action. In other hand, failures and successes are two sides of same creation work and should be considered as a reality which is companion of each activity. Humans are complex with variable patrimony, emotions and plans. If we add the fact that it is not an isolated but highly organized social being, then it is evident that its ego and super-ego are prone to variables. It is important that the person is satisfied with creativeness as a specific and personal way of expression. (Stevanovich M.2003:41,42). The main aim in the process of realization of the preschool program with children of middle and higher age groups who are with stay in at the kindergartens, it is coaching them to continue with creative pursuit towards the tasks and to maintain this habit after finishing with this chapter of education, to be able to develop their habits for creativity and to be ready for a new start at school. The focus is on the developing creativity, expecting to develop the creativity among the schoolchildren in preschool institutions, which is reflecting the future to enable the youth generations for independent and critical thinking, which is not possible to be implemented among all the students and those becoming innovators. The erudition is immeasurable value and it is quite meaningful to find its implementation in realization of education vocation at the kindergartens.

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**PROFESSIONALS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES IN
ALBANIA : THE PROFILE OF SPEECH AND LANGUAGE
PATHOLOGISTS**

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Abstract

Speech therapy is a relatively new medical discipline in the world which dates back to the eighteenth century. The main focus of this discipline lies in the early diagnosis and therapeutic treatment of pathologies of language and speech which are mainly related to the absence of the first word according to relevant milestones, poverty in vocabulary, inadequate speech with age. It is noteworthy that the re-education of articulation disorders occupies an important place in terms of therapeutic treatment in speech therapy, where the majority of patients, receiving the service, belong to the pediatric age. The development of the science of speech therapy in Albania, in addition to innovations has presented in practice a whole set of problems of technical-professional karater. In view of the purpose of this reference we are presenting part of the problems of this type, focusing on the concrete specifics of these problems. The institutional origin of the speech therapist profession in Albania was in 2004. The service was offered generalized and focused only on a few groups of beneficiaries, who were mainly located in the city of Tirana and Vlora. In 2008, there is a big step in the development of the speech therapy branch, as a group of eight students graduate from "Speech Therapy" with integrated degrees. There was a two-year break as a result of the lack of specialists in specialty subjects. A very important element, which is worth noting, is the lack of regulation of medical-technical professions in these years. Since 2010, the branch of Speech Therapy is offered at the Faculty of medical and Technical Sciences at the "Medical University of Tirana" for studies of first level BA and second level

Professional Master and Master of Science. In 2018, for the first time, the subject of Speech Therapy is integrated as part of the curricula of study programs offered at the Department of Education, University "Fan S. Noli", Korca.

Key words: *Speech therapy, speech therapist profession, services, Albania*

Introduction

Speech therapy is a relatively new medical discipline in the world which dates back to the eighteenth century. For the first time the initiative to create this specialty was born in England, initiated by the desire to perfect the eloquence of speech. Later for the first time in the US a doctor named Samuel Potter published a book in which he had summarized the main speech disorders. In 1926, the "American Academy of language and speech correction" was established. This new medical discipline gained its greatest boost during the 1940s and 1950s, where the phenomenon of loss of language and speech in soldiers with brain injuries was observed (History of the Professions - Health Sciences Library-University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2020).

Nowadays the object of "Speech Therapy" is not simply the treatment of patients with speech disabilities, but broader, including pragmatics in speech. According to the American Organization of speech therapists there are six main disciplines that rely on diagnosis and treatment by these specialists, which are: articulation, programming and execution of language, social use of communication, voice, fluency, chewing and swallowing (what are Speech-Language Pathologists, and what do they Do?, 2020).

The main focus of this discipline lies in the early diagnosis and therapeutic treatment of pathologies of language and speech which are mainly related to the absence of the first word according to relevant milestones, poverty in vocabulary, inadequate speech with age. It is noteworthy that the re-education of articulation disorders occupies an important place in terms of therapeutic treatment in speech therapy, where the majority of patients, receiving the service, belong to the pediatric age. The installation of language structures in patients who have hearing loss is recognized as one of the greatest benefits referred to speech therapy. But it is not only pediatric age that benefits from the diagnosis and treatment of speech therapists, a target group treated by these specialists are adults, who as a result of primary pathologies in the nervous system may lose the ability to communicate, chew and swallow. The treatment of these overlapping pathologies is carried out by means of

specific therapies, after the evaluation and speech therapy balance has been carried out initially. Overuse of the voice in different professions can lead us to its pathologies, which can only be overcome by Speech Therapy Rehabilitation. It is these that we mentioned above, all those pathology clinics, which find the presence of a speech therapist inevitable and irreplaceable to be rehabilitated.

Comparative history overview about speech therapy service

Treatment of speech therapy service in Albania

The institutional origin of the speech therapist profession in Albania was in 2004, when a group of specialists were trained by the French Aleanca to provide therapeutic services that were not differentiated according to the disciplines. The service was offered generalized and focused only on a few groups of beneficiaries, who were mainly located in the city of Tirana and Vlova. The basic training of these specialists was the French language and as teaching competence combined their skills with therapeutic knowledge (Alliance Fanceze in Albania, 2020).

The number of beneficiaries was very high and a group of five therapists found it very difficult to cover the entire country with service. Thus arose the need to open a branch of this nature at the Faculty of Medicine at that time one of the faculties of the "University of Tirana". Quotas were few, as were the number of lecturers offering specialty lectures. The source of difficulty was also the fact of the lack of knowledge of this new and very necessary profession. In 2008, there is a big step in the development of the speech therapy branch, as a group of eight students graduate from "Speech Therapy" with integrated degrees. According to the early pedagogues of this branch there was a two-year break as a result of the lack of specialists in specialty subjects. A very important element, which is worth noting, is the lack of regulation of medical-technical professions in these years. Since 2010, the branch of Speech Therapy is offered at the Faculty of medical and Technical Sciences at the "Medical University of Tirana" for studies of first level BA and second level MA and Msc.

Referring to the data of QSHA in Albania, today, offer the service about two hundred speech therapists of which about 85% in the private sector and a very small percentage in the public sector. Some of these specialists are also involved in teaching, which has enriched the information in the Albanian language regarding the literature of this new branch.

In 2018, for the first time, the subject of Speech Therapy is integrated as part of the curricula of study programs offered at the Department of Education, University

"Fan S. Noli", Korca. The inclusion of Speech Therapy as a subject in these study programs aims to provide basic knowledge to future employees of the education system, in order to have early intervention in terms of speech disorders and pathologies.

Treatment of speech therapy service in Kosovo

The growing field of speech therapy was first introduced in Kosovo as an undergraduate program at "Heimerer college". Accredited by the Ministry of Education of Kosovo, this program prepares students for professional practice as "speech therapist". The Bachelor's program in "speech therapy" enables students to learn the treatment of communication disorders in children and adults. These disorders include speech problems, voice problems, stuttering, and swallowing.

The program of "Speech Therapy" deliberately sorted the subjects of the program so that students, first, learn about the normal processes of verbal communication and then building on this basis study academic subjects with a special focus on Communication Disorders. The curriculum was created to shape higher-level speech therapists. Similar to other programs in Heimerer, "Speech Therapy" attaches great importance to practical or experimental education, in which students develop professionally only in theoretical subjects, but is given special importance to laboratory research and clinical experience.

During this three-year program, students have the opportunity to acquire skills and knowledge from professors, professionals and researchers with considerable expertise in a wide range of language, speech and swallowing disorders. This unique program at Heimerer created a precious educational experience, as students are exposed to a neatly selected academic content to create a generation of competent speech therapists in Kosovo and the region.

Due to Heimerer College's commitment to responsibility and social impact, students and graduates of this program also work towards raising awareness of language and speech disorders as members of different communities. (Speech Therapist (BSc) Heimerer College, 2020)

According to the earliest professionals in the field in Kosovo, initially, in 2010, there were only ten speech therapists, all of whom graduated mainly in Belgrade and Zagreb, as there was no higher education institution in Kosovo where they could study at the speech therapy branch. Currently in Kosovo there are about three hundred

speech therapists employed mainly in the private sector, of which only five of them hold the title "Doctor. Sciences " and a small part work as lecturers in private universities where these services are provided.

Statistics show that a very large number of children attending school in Kosovo and Albania present speech and language disorders, consequently the need for speech therapy treatment arises, which is currently not offered in any educational institution either in Kosovo or in Albania.

The University Center of Kosovo provides speech therapy services. There work about six speech therapists, who provide service to patients who need these services. This branch operates within the Department of Otorhinolaryngology and is currently the only institution that provides state service (Kosovo with a shortage of speech therapists, 2020).

The functioning mechanism is the same for both countries as speech therapists graduate from medical universities, with the only difference that in Kosovo this branch is offered only in private universities and, subsequently, their employment is carried out by other line ministries, such as the Ministry of Health, Education and Social Affairs.

The lack of studies in Albania and in the region has made it even more difficult to recognize concrete figures regarding patients who need this service, their demographic distribution, the number of speech therapists per patient or the number of actual beneficiaries of the service. The only studies that enable us statistics are those developed individually by specialists in the field or students of the discipline. Since 2018 to date, 84 children (32 girls and 52 boys) with disabilities aged 3-18 have received 4,545 specialized service sessions in speech therapy at local service delivery institutions in Kosovo, a number that increased significantly compared to the period 2015-2017, where the beneficiaries of this service did not even reach the figure of 28. Regarding the attitude of the population regarding the recognition and benefit of this service, the data collected from the research so far show that less than 40% of the population know this profession and less than 16% have benefited from the service. These figures show that the lack of information on this discipline leads to the non-profit of the service, when necessary (safety, 2020).

Unlike Albania and Kosovo it seems to be the situation in Serbia, where this profession appears more consolidated and better regulated. Referring to preliminary data, speech therapists in this country can graduate from medical universities and then

have the opportunity to specialize through various masters and microspecialities in educational and social direction, covering schools, kindergartens, hospitals and day centers with service. Currently the programs are offered in several universities and the profession is regulated by the relevant order.

In a broader and comparative view referring to Europe if we dwell on one of the most complete models we will mention France. If we take a comparative look, we will notice that the number of speech therapists in France has increased from 19,750 in 2010 to 25,607 in 2018, figures that indicate service coverage of most patients in need (number of SLPs France 2010-2018|Statista, 2020). This discipline is offered profiled starting from Ba studies which can be taken at the Faculties of social or Medical Sciences depending, specialization continues in the diagnostic or therapeutic field

There are a number of microspecialities that are offered both for the medical and social profile, where the latter prepare professionals who provide services in nurseries, primary school kindergartens, day care centers, palliative care centers, Primary Health System, second level hospitals, as well as at univesitary level, where the speech therapy clinic is specialized as a separate ward that provides evaluation, diagnosis and outpatient and long-term treatment services.

Another growing figure for the period 2010-2018 is the salary of a speech therapist, where depending on qualifications and experience, the context in which he offers the service, amounts to an average of 40 euros per hour. Of course, France has been one of the early countries to develop this discipline, which coincides with its current level and progress, in terms of professional/patient and professional/sector ratio. These are among the success models to be evaluated in practice.

Progress and problems of legal, technical-professional and economic-social character in Albania.

Legal aspect

The functioning of any institution or regulation of any service even in our country, as everywhere in all other countries, requires first of all the existence of a necessary legal framework. This framework constitutes at the same time the essential legal condition, without which no service may function or exist, including the service subject to this reference the speech therapist. Thus, if we refer precisely to the bed or the legal basis of this service in Albania, it turned out that: the basic act of the Albanian state, "the Constitution of the Republic of Albania", adopted in 1998, provides in its provision that "all citizens have the right to be guaranteed full health care on their part".

This is accomplished through relevant state structures or institutions.

This constitutional guarantee should be provided to all citizens equally, by not discriminating against anyone (Article 55 of the Constitution of the Republic of Albania). This health care means the range of all diseases or pathologies that citizens may have, where certainly persons or citizens who suffer from mental health pathologies cannot remain outside these services. Even this target group of persons, whether major or minor, who belong to these groups have the right to security and state care through relevant instances. Among these health care services we can mention the speech therapy service, which is institutionalized even though in the embryonic stages in our country.

This conditional right constitutes one of the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. It is not without purpose that the constitutionalist has nominated such a right to Chapter IV, of the Constitution labeled "economic, social and Cultural Freedoms and rights". This is because this right of citizens really belongs precisely to the social rights offered to them by the state.

In addition to the act with the highest legal force in our state, the Constitution, not a few freedoms and fundamental rights of the state are protected by acts of international character. One such act is the European Convention on Human Rights. This international act is already part of our domestic legal system, being directly referable. This is because by law nr. No. 8137, dated 31.7.1996" on the ratification of the European Convention for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms " was made by the Albanian parliament to ratify this convention.

This law had entered into force immediately after promulgation by decree NR. 1573, dated 2.08.1996 of the president of the Republic and the publication in the "Official Gazette" No. 20, p. 724. Referring to the content of this convention, we note that among the fundamental freedoms and rights of citizens it protects and protects is the right to respect for private and family life. According to the convention, everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his property. While public authority may not interfere in the exercise of this right, except to the extent provided by law and where necessary in a democratic society in the interest of public safety, for the protection of Public Order, health or morality, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. While, under this convention, all contracting parties who have signed and ratified the convention provide everyone within their jurisdiction with the rights and freedoms set forth in "Section I" of this convention. Thus, these contracting

parties have the obligation to respect human rights. (see the European Convention for the protection of Human Rights and fundamental freedoms, Articles 1 and 8 thereof).

Referring precisely to these provisions of the convention, we conclude that in addition to the Constitution, this act with high legal force sanctions and protects even on the international level, among other things, the right to health protection of any kind of health, of citizens of the states that have ratified it, including citizens of our country. This right is provided for in the framework of respect for the right to private and family life. In the framework of the protection of this right, the convention allows the public authorities or its member states to intervene in the exercise of such a right, only if they prove the existence of one of the justified legal cases, where, inter alia, it is cited "...and where it is required or intended to protect the health of citizens". In this sense, it is concluded that these rights, freedoms and restrictions provided for in the convention, including the right to health protection, subject to this reference, States contracting parties have the obligation within their territory to provide each citizen with these rights, or in the present case this right. Thus, the Albanian state, with the quality of the contracting party to the convention, carries the obligation of ensuring the protection of the health of Albanian citizens, through the provision of various services, referring to the type of Health injuries. One of these services that the state recognizes and guarantees, in relation to mental health, is the one that has to do with speech therapy service.

On the other hand, our state itself during its functioning aims at the realization of fundamental freedoms and rights of citizens, considering them as social objectives. Seen in this constitutional perspective, we conclude that in Chapter V, of our Constitution, social objectives are sanctioned (see Article 59, of the Constitution of the Republic of Albania). The concrete constitutional provision, which provides for social objectives, sanctions in its content that: "... the state, within the constitutional powers and tools at its disposal, as well as in addition to the initiative and private responsibility, aims:.....f) health rehabilitation, specialized education and integration into society of the disabled, as well as the continuous improvement of their living conditions " referring to this constitutional provision it turns out that the state not only guarantees on paper a number of constitutional rights to citizens, including what concerns their health care, but at the same time it aims at the realization in practice of these constitutional rights. So, through state mechanisms, the state strives in any period of time to fulfill this constitutional obligation.

If we refer specifically to the right to health care, through the provision of

various medical and therapeutic services, such as the speech therapist, the state, in addition to the legal recognition of this type of Service, and even as a curriculum in public and private universities, guarantees the rights of citizens receiving this service through the creation of various centers, with professionals in this field, equipped with the relevant licenses, providing such a service.

However, despite such a constitutional provision in relation to social objectives, the constitutionalist has at the same time predicted that for their fulfillment, citizens cannot legitimize to directly address the court with such a concrete search. This is because it is the law itself that defines the conditions and the extent to which the realization of these objectives can be sought. Although such a constitutional provision is blanket, its interpretation leads to the legal framework (a set of laws), based on and for the implementation of the Constitution, which discipline and regulate different areas of social life, guaranteeing different rights of citizens. One of these rights is those that are foreseen and protected by laws in the field of Health. As such, we can also mention the law no.44/2012 "on mental health" which has repealed law no.8092, dated 21.3.1996"on mental health".

Referring to the content of the above law, it turns out that its goal is to protect and promote mental health, prevent problems related to it, guarantee rights and improve the quality of life for people with mental health disorders. In this regard, this law in its object cites that it defines the procedures and conditions for the protection of mental health, through the provision of health care, the provision of a suitable social environment for persons with mental health disorders and through preventive policies for the protection of mental health. (See articles 1 and 2 of law nr.Law No. 44/2012, on mental health which has repealed law no.8092, dated 21.3.1996"on mental health".

Yes this law, in Article nr.His 10, foresees the concrete categories of mental health services. Among these categories are those nominated in letters b and c of this provision, named "Community Mental Health Services and specialized outpatient services". In relation to community mental health services they provide according to this law preventive, curative and rehabilitation actions for people with mental health disorders. Likewise, the legislator provides that community mental health services are provided by a multidisciplinary team and have several objectives or goals. As such we can mention the preservation, development and rehabilitation of individual opportunities to overcome emergency or chronic needs, as well as social integration, psychosocial rehabilitation and social and professional rehabilitation. While in specialized mental

health outpatient services, the legislator has provided that they are services provided by doctors specialized in medical discipline psychiatry, nursing staff and qualified support personnel, who exercise their activity in public and private health care institutions.

Referring to these legal provisions we find that the legal bed or the legal basis, in which the speech therapy service in Albania supports the activity are exactly these concrete legal provisions. This is because this type of Service is actually introduced and sanctioned as such in the category of community services of mental health, as well as specialized outpatient services. In the community services of mental health, which as cited are provided by multidisciplinary teams, is a member or in the composition of these teams the speech therapist. This specialist or person with special knowledge is necessary in determining the linguistic diagnosis of a person with mental health abnormalities. Likewise, this type of Service is also introduced and sanctioned in specialized outpatient services. The legislator in the new updated law on mental health, in addition to medical psychiatric specialists, considers or introduces nursing staff, as well as qualified support personnel, where all three of these groups of professionals exercise their activity in health care institutions, both public and private. While the speech therapist or speech therapist are an exception to the first group, identifying themselves as psychiatrists, both groups are fully inclusive. This is because the speech therapist is a qualified support staff, but it can also be defined as nursing staff, since his activity is currently regulated not by a specific order, but precisely by the order of the nurse..

From the analysis cited above, it is clearly established that the protection of the health of citizens, including mental health, as well as services or professions that provide its protection, where they could distinguish the speech therapist, through various speech therapists, has a legal framework in our country. Exactly this framework has been treated and analyzed above. What we can highlight from this analysis is the fact that this framework appears of general character and that it has proved necessary for it to be developed, updated and adapted to specific laws and sub-legal acts, specifically intended for this service and profession. Such a thing will make more applicable in practice from the legal and institutional point of view the speech therapy service of health care in our country. (UISH, 2020, (law no.8092, dt. 21.3.1996, on mental health, 2020).

Technical-professional aspect

The development of the science of speech therapy in Albania, in addition to

innovations has presented in practice a whole set of problems of technical-professional karater. In view of the purpose of this reference we are presenting part of the problems of this type, focusing on the concrete specifics of these problems.

A problem encountered in the practice line of the speech therapist profession is that which has to do with the lack of diagnostic materials, which are currently scarce and untrained. The standardization of international diagnostic tests is one of the basic steps that lead to improving the way of diganostication and then treatment. As an appropriate solution to this problem is the regulation of this profession by the corresponding order of the speech therapist and not by integrating into any other technical order. This would entail, among other things, the enrichment of the professional's treatment portfolio with the necessary and appropriate therapeutic materials with the diagnoses preset by the latter through diagnostic texts. Likewise, it is concluded that standardization of both diagnostic and therapeutic materials is directly related to early intervention and immediate service delivery with the respective protocols.

First in the optics of problems of technical-professional character we find that the absence of speech therapist in schools is one of the main barriers, which does not enable early intervention and service delivery in the educational framework. In this sense, we can say that the presence of this specialist in preschool and primary education institutions would also be a starting point for early diagnosis, extensive information and intensive treatment. Not only that, but the inclusion of subjects with such a topic in public and private universities should also be institutionalized. What is presented as an effective solution or proposal in relation to the second moment and which would eliminate such a problem encountered, is the inclusion of a subject or group of persons with a focus on speech therapy service in the programs or curricula of any such educational institution. This would help, in the framework of additional training, students who study in courses or programs of educational or psychological medical type.

From this point of view, based on an embryonic practice of these groups of subjects, which is institutionalized only in some of the universities, it has arisen necessary to unify these curricula or programs in all universities. This institutionalization is undoubtedly related to the institutionalization of other speech therapist specialists, besides those who have the status of professors and specialists, in educational institutions.

Another aspect of this indicator is the problem related to the promotion and information of health, education and beyond. From a research of this aspect it is clearly found that in our country there is a lack of institutionalized information system for both medical personnel and beyond for the community. It should be distinct and accessible first to the groups that are at the service of this profession, and then to all beneficiaries. We say this because information could serve the general public, not only for general culture, regardless of whether they are layers that can be beneficiaries of the service, but also for research purposes. Such a thing could be ensured through numerous information materials, or various information programs, multiple Fomra, such as print media, webside, television programs, information brochures, etc.

In addition to the lack of an institutionalized system in terms of technical-professional problems, we also note the lack of an institutionalized legal system regarding the promotion of speech therapists.

This would categorize this group of professionals or technicians themselves, based on the development of professional skills, referring to different qualifications or tests. The idea and operation of this mechanism of promotion of speech therapists could be realized, taking or borrowing the best contemporary experiences of different countries. Taking and adapting according to the conditions of our country the best practices in terms of promoting speech therapists would institutionalize and make such a system productive. A practical form of institutionalization of this practice could also be the creation of a scoring system, among speech therapists. This would guarantee a layer or a value of qualified and promoted professionals.

Conclusions and suggestions

From this descriptive study, at the end of it we can come to some conclusions and suggestions regarding its content or essence. So:

In our country for several years there has been, organized and functioning speech therapy service. On the other hand, referring to this paper, it is concluded that this type of service in this country is still unconsolidated and not institutionalized sustainable. So, on the one hand it is concluded that the introduction or implementation of the speech therapy service is considered as an innovation, which helps a certain target group of persons, protecting their rights to be rehabilitated and socialized in society, it is also found that this service presents at the same time problems of legal, technical-

professional and economic-social character. All these findings we have reflected and addressed in the concluding part of this paper, giving the relevant suggestions or recommendations, in the form of solving these problems.

From the elimination, resolution or prevention of problems, problems or anomalies found during the practical exercise of this profession or the provision of this type of service, depends directly and respect, guarantee and exercise in practice all the legal and socio-economic rights of persons who are beneficiaries of this type of Service. This target group of persons should not only be recognized these rights, but they should also be really guaranteed during the exercise in practice, through mechanisms to benefit this type of service, very necessary for the health of this group of citizens.

In this regard, we think that only if we start from the adaptation and consolidation of the legal bed of this service and continue with the avoidance of structural, technical - professional, as well as economic - social problems, we can say and conclude that the speech therapy service in our country would appear complete, effective and consolidated. In this way it would guarantee a real respect for the basic rights of the person or persons who/ who needs this type of Service. It should be emphasized that every person who needs speech therapy service in Albania as a citizen of this country, enjoys full legal and practical rights to provide this assistance in real time, even with coverage of economic costs, when they are part of the group of persons in need.

In these circumstances, at the conclusion of this paper, we conclude, without the slightest doubt, that the creation and operation of the speech therapy service in Albania, as part of a whole set of services, is a good start, but which is required to be further developed and consolidated, to achieve the standards of the region and beyond. This requires a commitment work, pikesepari by state bodies through special politics. The approach of this service in relation to the sister services of other countries of the region and the European Union, where we intend to join, creating a new and valued standard, undoubtedly guarantees the constitutional and legal rights of the entire target group of persons who benefit from such a service. Only in this way will this group of persons or citizens be truly guaranteed all

constitutional, legal, economic and social rights recognized by acts of international character, as well as internal or national ones, of a constitutional and legal nature.

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**EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND INTERVENTIONS FOR
CHILDREN WITH AUTISM IN THE TIRANA'S
MUNICIPALITY CRÈCHES FOR IMPROVING THEIR
ADJUSTMENTS IN THESE INSTITUTIONS**

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Abstract

The early identification and treatment are the most important interventions to help and improve the life of children with autism/or suspected to develop autism.

The aim of this study is to spread and exchange between professionals the good practices of working with autistic children/ or suspected to develop autism, the process of identification, interventions by the psycho-social staff and teachers and also the awareness of the parents about the importance of childrens early interventions. One the most distinguished intervention for the children with autism in the crèches of Tirana is treating them as a subject: like creating ways of communication, attachments and plays unique for each of them. This intervention has been successful for helping children learn to address their needs, reducing anxiety and engaging with others.

Also collaboration of psycho-social staff, principals and teachers as a whole group, each with its discerned position, has improved the adjustment of children during their attendance in the crèches. Observing these children after they leave the crèches, it was noticed that children who were provided specialized intervention in the early stage of age, were adapted easier on preschool programs or institutions.

Keywords: autism, identification, intervention, crèches, early childhood

Introduction

Studies have evidenced that crèches, kindergarten and the teachers of these institutions could be a confident and effective source for the early

detection and evaluation of autism symptoms (Dereu, Warreyn, Raymaekers, Meirsschaut, Pattyn, Schietecatte, & Roeyers, 2010)⁶. The early identification and treatment are the most important interventions to help and improve the life of children with autism/or suspected to develop autism.

The use of a simple check-list created by the psychologists and social workers of public crèches in the Municipality of Tirana, the observations of children behavior, social engagement with teachers/crèches staff/other children in the groups and the analysis of their addressing needs and attachment with teachers/staff/parents are 3 instruments for early identification of children with autism. The check-list instruments are accomplished by the teachers and are screening in progress by the psychologists; the observations of children behaviors, their social engagement, addressing needs and attachment with teachers are observed by the psycho-social staff and other information is completed by the teachers and directors of crèches.

One the most distinguished intervention for the children with autism in the crèches of Tirana is treating them as a subject: like creating ways of communication, attachments and plays unique for each of them. This intervention has been successful for helping children learn to address their needs, reducing anxiety and engaging with others.

Also collaboration of psycho-social staff, principals and teachers as a whole group, each with its discerned position, has improved the adjustment of children during their attendance in the crèches.

The aim of this study is to spread and exchange between professionals the good practices of working with autistic children/ or suspected to develop autism, the process of identification, interventions by the psycho-social staff and teachers and also the awareness of the parents about the importance of childrens early interventions.

As a result, training psychologists, social workers, teacher and other

⁶Dereu, M., Raymaekers, R., Warrey, P., Schietecatte, I., Meirsschaut, M., & Roeyers, H. (2012). *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* pp.42, 781-796. Doi: 10.1007/s10803-011-1307-9 Can child care workers contribute to early detection of autism spectrum disorders? A comparison between screening instruments with child care workers versus parent as informants.

staff to observe the childrens behaviours and their adressing needs, to detect and to create an intervention unique for that unique child is the best way to plan early interventions that could help the child makes tolerable this pitiless part which inhabits and animates him. "Creating unique interventions for these unique children is also the best way for them to make a life worthy of respect"⁷.

One of the methods used for identification of autism early symptoms at children in the public crèches of Tirana is the observation of children that is a very efficient and clinical instrument for helping psychologist, physicians detecting and diagnosing autism. According to Boursier, "The attentive function of the gaze, exercised by the psychologist, gives a form to the experience lived in the field of observation, of which gaze is a part, by translating and giving meaning to what is observed, thanks to a function of thought and speech that indirectly supports the development of young children and educators by guiding, in group reflection, educational work and preventive interventions"⁸. Also, the attentive function of the gaze, exercised by the observing psychologist, gives a form to the experience lived in the field of observation of which the psychologist is a part by translating and giving meaning to what is observed, thanks to a function of thought and speech that indirectly supports the development of young children and educators by guiding, in group reflection, educational work and preventive interventions. Borgogno, 1978, underlined that observation " Aims to grasp what is not visible to the naked eye - psychic phenomena, motivational, intentional or not - that is to say what is hidden behind behaviors, what guides them and what explains them, it cannot be limited to gaze and description, but it must necessarily take into account consideration of the fact of being and feeling, which allows the gaze on the other and on the outside to proceed in parallel with the observation of what is personal and internal"⁹.

Also, the process of observation has helped the psycho-social staff of the public crèches in Tirana to evaluate the ways children create

⁷ Daniel Roy "Lettre mensuelle" (311), 2012

⁸ Boursier, V. L'observation psychanalytique en crèche : un soutien au développement de l'enfant et à la relation éducationnelle

⁹ Borgogno, F. "Illusione di osservare", 1978

attachment with educators/teachers, how they address their needs and the ways they play with toys and other children. These are indicators that could help evaluation and diagnosing autism.

Introduction on autism

In 1943 Leo Kanner introduced the concept of "Early Childhood Autism" (Rutter et al. 1994, p. 569)¹⁰ A few months later in 1944 Asperger started a study on his thesis "Psychopathology of childhood autism" (Simpson, 2004)¹¹. Kanner described some features of autism such as difficulties in social relationships (lack of eye contact, lack of spontaneous behaviors such as pointing the object of interest, lack of social and emotional reciprocity), communication difficulties (lack of spoken language, vocal stereotype, inability to initiate and maintain a conversation) and behavior difficulties (low flexibility, ritual, lack of symbolic play, etc).

The recent version of the DSM, the fifth edition, eliminates the term PDD and with it the distinction of the five disorders that fell under its category. The DSM-V now classifies these disorders as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) whereby symptoms fall along a continuum. The DSM-V recognizes three distinct levels of ASD severity (APA, 2013)¹². Level one includes individuals who require the least amount of support. These individuals may have received a diagnosis of Asperger Disorder in the DSM-IV. Those with ASD Level One find initiating social interactions difficult, lack interest in their social worlds, have difficulty switching between activities and exhibit inflexible behaviors. ASD Level Two severities includes those who have deficits in verbal and nonverbal communication, limit their initiation of social interaction, find it hard to cope with change, and have restricted and repetitive behaviors (APA, 2013). The most severe cases of ASD are found in individuals with

10Rutter, M. (1993) *Developing Minds: Challenge and Continuity Across the Life Span*. London: Penguin

11Simpson, D. (2004) *Asperger's Syndrome and Autism: Distinct Syndromes with Important Similarities*. In Rhode, M. & Klauber, T. (eds.) *The Many Faces of Asperger's Syndrome*. London: Karnac, pp. 25-38.

12American Psychiatric Association (2013). *Autism Spectrum Disorder*. APA Publishing. Retrieved from: <http://www.dsm5.org/Documents/Autism%20Spectrum%20Disorder%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

Level Three severities. These people have severe deficits in verbal and nonverbal communication skills, provide minimal responses to others, have extreme trouble coping with change, display restricted and repetitive behaviors, and show signs of great distress when changing tasks (APA, 2013). According to ICD-10, autism is part of Diffuse Developmental Disorders. ICD-10 emphasizes the difference between infantile and atypical autism. Infantile autism according to ICD-10 (2016)¹³ is a persistent developmental disorder, characterized by: (a) the presence of a delayed development that manifests before the age of three, and (b) atypical functioning in three areas of psychopathology: social interaction, communication, stereotypical and repetitive behavior. In addition to these diagnostic features, several other nonspecific problems are present, such as phobias, eating and sleeping disorders, temperamental outbursts, and self-directed aggression.

Early identification of autism in the crèches.

The experience in working with children gives teachers the ability to identify and recognize development difficulties in children. Sometimes teachers and experts have difficulty to understand if they are related with autism or any other developmental disorder because the difficulties/symptoms that children show are unclear for any diagnosis. Identifying the symptoms and making a diagnosis before the age of three is unclear even for specialists in the field of mental health for this reason we intervene on the symptom/ difficulty that the child shows at that moment we are cooperating with him.

To understand the progress and development of children in crèches, we use a simple check-list created by the psychologists and social workers of Tirana' public crèches (2017) that is accomplished by teachers. We called these instruments "assessment mirrors". These check-lists evaluate a child's progress in four areas of development: orality, toilet, and hygiene, play and activity, communication, behavior and humor. These check- lists assess the

¹³ICD-10 (2016), ICD-10 – International statistical classification of diseases and related health problems”, Volume 1– Tabular list, Fifth edition, pp.402.

development of children in 5 categories based on age, respectively: 6-12 months, 13-18-20 months, 20-24 months, 25-30 months, and 30-36 months. These "Assessment mirrors" are screening in progress by psycho-social staff and helps them identifying children who have difficulty in one or more field of development.

Observation is one of the most used methods for identifying and evaluating children in public crèches. After the case is referred to the psychologist, the child is observed twice a week and more often. For every child with autism symptoms or suspected teachers and psychologists keep descriptive notes, where they describe and analyze children behavior, attitudes, and situation that take place in the crèches environment, in relation with teacher and peers.

The importance of teachers and psycho-social staff in identifying autism symptoms.

Children attend crèches start by the age of 6 months to the age of 36 months. Teachers are able to detect autism symptoms in 13-month-olds toddlers, although doubts about the presence of symptoms of autism start earlier. For an entity to meet the diagnostic criteria for ASD, symptoms must be present in the first two years of life (APA, 2013). The first symptoms we notice before the child turns one year old are, delayed language, lack of interest in social interaction, and unusual communication (APA, 2013). During the second year of life, inappropriate and repetitive behaviors become more apparent and the typical play and behaviors are absent (APA, 2013).

Among the first symptoms of autism identified by teachers are lack of eye contact, unresponsiveness to noise or strangers in the group, passive posture and lack of social smile with teachers/caregivers. Usually, children with autism who attend crèches in the first days don't cry or make any reaction when parent leaves; they don't react to the presence or absence of the primary caregiver. Also, they show lack of affective or emotional response when parents/caregivers come to take them back, the child in these situations needs the help of a teacher. Over time, teachers realize that the child does not react to music, loud sounds or when other children are crying, manifest lack of interest in toys or plays inappropriately. Autistic children are selective in some foods and have difficulty in feeding. At an older age, the

symptoms and identification of autism symptoms become even easier. The child start to get involved in his routine, repeat continuously sound lacks symbolic language and spoken language. Parents usually say that their child before the age of one said for the first time “mama”, “pa”, but at age of one or two, they don’t pronounce new words. Some children start to repeat the words that teachers say. Usually, children repeat the first or the last word that they hear. The child prefers to stand alone, lie down or in a corner, have limited preferences for a certain object, has a lack of interest in group activities, they refuse to sit or interact with other children. The evidence and descriptive data collected during the observation of children on crèches demonstrate that children with autism/ or with suspected symptoms have interest on the books images. Some children open the book in a reverse way, so they start to open it from the last page. Some children flip continuously the page of the book, but they don’t show any interest for the image on it. An interesting thing that was observed during work in crèches is the reaction of children with autism against their reflection on mirror. They have difficulty to recognize their own image on mirror. When playing with his image, the child looks behind the mirror if there is someone else. We must consider that the cases are unique as well as the characteristics of each child.

Intervention:

After identifying the cause and symptoms of autism a communication with parents is made, to inform them about the development difficulties of their children. The first reaction of parents will be rejection and denial. Since the children on the crèches are toddler, the parent comes in the hope that the child will change with growth. Some parents say that even the father or other close familiars of children have spoken late when they were toddler, have been shy, etc. In this situation, social- workers and psychologist’s effort to understand parents and find an appropriate way to communicate with them, without avoiding the immediate child's need for intervention. Parents are advised to change and analyse their attitudes at home such as, to limit the use of technological tools, to ask children to follow simple instructions, etc. First the crèches staf communicate with parents to inform about the abilities and progress of the child. It's important to share information with parents about the child's behavior and attitudes at home, about relationship of child

with other family members, the way that child play at home, the sleep regime, etc. The teachers continuously give parents information on what the child does / or does not in the crèches, about the difficulties he/she has. When parents begin to cooperate and accept that his/her child has a different development compared with peers, then the psychologist and the social worker make sure to refer them to one of the public mental health centers for an evaluation report. After receiving the assessment of the child from a psychologist or mental health doctor, the psychologist and social workers design an intervention plan which is implemented every day by the teachers.

First teachers are instructed to understand and observe the interests and preferences of children which may be; music, a certain object, a song, etc. It's important to understand who is the privileged object, for which the child has a specific interest. We use these privileged objects to build the intervention plan and through it we achieve an attachment and positive relationship with the children. *"We treat the child as he is, with his potential and disabilities, but also with the privileged object that can be a stick, part of an object, a cartoon character - and so we create goals, strategies, expand and generalize this privileged object, we are focused on interest of the child, gradually moving him towards the learning process. Thus the interest of the child leads to the required work, and thus the child is motivated in itself and the demand becomes a source of satisfaction. Hurly-Burly (2012)¹⁴.*

The work in crèches shows us that the use and identification of the privileged object, have defined the effectiveness of intervention in children with autism. We use these object to achieve a positive teacher-child relationship, to attract child attention to activities, encourage interaction with peers, to ensure eye contact etc. We use these object or favorite activity to expanding with new element the typical play or activity of child, to promote in these ways the cognition and speech development of the child.

We don't intend to change the child, to suit him on our environment or the requirements of the institution. We try to adapt the environment (if

¹⁴Hurly-Burly, the international Lacanian journal of psychoanalysis, may 2012, pg 180-185.

possible) and our attitude to the need of the child by understanding his world. We create a caring and affective relationship with the child. The child should not see us as an object or as a subject that he can use for his own interests. After building this teacher-child relationship, the intervention and interaction with the child will be easier and spontaneous, avoiding being intrusive. *"What a good therapist does, is tried to figure out ways that build on an individual child's strengths, that use their interests, but that allow them to participate in society and that will give them the most choices. That's what we want. We don't want just the best-behaved person, we want a person who can do as much as possible, and get as much joy as possible out of the world."*(Dr.Lord)¹⁵. Creating an attachment and affective relationship is very important in work with children with autism symptoms. The evidence that we have provided from our experience in crèches, show that sometimes children are selective and choose to interact and create an effective relationship with one of teachers, supervisor, psychologist, etc. Once the child accepts us and allows us to intervene in the activity, he allows us to play with him and in this moment we can start our intervention. In the crèches, the work is focused on stimulating the child's skills to integrate him into the classroom and play. An analysis is also made after observing child for one or two months, we describe children posture and actions to understand his or her progress. Crèches staff inform parent about this intervention plan and also give them advice to work in home. The focus on work with autism children is to emphasize a child's abilities and strengths and training him as a unique being. *"Do not give instructions that will lead to situations that you are not able to manage (eg make him sit down, try to maintain eye contact, make him say hello and goodbye). In other words, do not ask anything if you are not prepared to manage the situation that could lead to the need to physically intervene."* Hurly-Burly (2012)¹⁶ .

Teachers are trained to avoid uncomfortable situations with the child. They also try not to be intrusive in what they ask child to do, they try

¹⁵<https://childmind.org/article/controversy-around-applied-behavior-analysis/>

¹⁶Hurly-Burly, the International Lacanian Journal of Psychoanalysis, May 2012, pg 180-185.

to respect his inner integrity. One of the characteristics of autism is the setting of strict boundaries, they build a shell around them into which is very difficult to enter. If we try to get inside this shell intrusively, creating a zone of discomfort for the child, then we risk frustrating the child, and in this way he will show us what many therapists describe like inappropriate behaviors. What we do is analyze these behaviors and if our action has been the cause of the situation then we change our intervention. If we allow ourselves to be oriented by the child and intervene in his interest without compromising but integrating into it new elements which are accepted by the child then the learning process will be more effective. *"There are other ways to manipulate the environment for the child to experience the skills naturally. Children are able to generalize the skills learned in a spontaneous situation beyond therapy sessions and use these skills in the world around them".*¹⁷

The intervention takes place in the child environment, the child stay in the crèches for 4 hours or more. We manipulate and change the environment by adapting it to the child's learning needs. We also try to integrate the child into games and activities with peers. Respecting the wishes, time, and abilities of the child we achieve that he gradually adapts to the routines and programs that we use in crèches. Observing these children after they leave the crèches, it was noticed that children who were provided specialized intervention in the early stage of age, were adapted easier on preschool programs or institutions. In the crèches also we work with children in order they can achieve independence in carrying out activities of daily living such as; toilet treatment, the child is encouraged to sit at the table with peers, to feed himself without help, to attend a class activity, to hold a pencil and scribble with it, to know its own objects, etc. The child's progress depends on the severity of autism symptoms and the time they stay in the crèches. Every step starting from identification, communication with the parent, referral, and intervention are very important in the further progress of the child.

¹⁷<https://childmind.org/article/controversy-around-applied-behavior-analysis/>

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THE ROLE OF A BREASTFEEDING CONSULTANT IN AN EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE: A SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLE FROM BULGARIA

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Introduction

Integrated early childhood services are relatively new to Bulgaria. It is only since 2016 that they can be found in 66 out of 266 municipalities in the country due to the large project for Early childhood care and education, funded by Human Resources Development operational programme. Teams consist of social workers, psychologists, mediators, speech therapists, pedagogues and various medical practitioners. Only in Veliko Tarnovo's "TSAREVGRAD" Community centre for children and parents pregnant women and new mothers have access to a breastfeeding consultant certified by National Association for Breastfeeding Support. In this article we discuss the functions of the consultant in the light of project's goals and its outcomes as well as her role in the multidisciplinary team of specialists. It is also a successful example of collaboration between a national NGO and the municipality of Veliko Tarnovo as a provider of the early childhood services.

Methodology

The main hypothesis of the research is that the breastfeeding consultant is a needed specialist in early childhood services with an important contribution to its activities and quality.

Our goal is to present the early childhood services as they are delivered in Bulgaria at this particular moment and to show how a certified by the National Association for Breastfeeding Support consultant can relate to their activities and outcomes within his range of competences.

In order to accomplish our goals we studied the documentation of The Early Childhood Services Project and the description of "TSAREVGRAD" Community centre for children and parents in Veliko Tarnovo, as well as the

National Association for Breastfeeding Support mission, goals and values. We also searched for the following data in the “TSAREVGRAD” Centre’s registers:

- annual number of group meetings led by the breastfeeding consultant and the number of its participants from 2017 to 2021;
- annual number of individual breastfeeding consultations from 2017 to 2021;
- other activities dedicated to breastfeeding from 2017 to 2021.

The report is also based on the personal experience of the author as the breastfeeding consultant and a manager of the “TSAREVGRAD” Community Centre for Children and Parents up to 2019.

Results

Up to 2015 early childhood services were developed only by NGOs in several cities of the country – Sofia, Varna, Ruse. In 2015 due to the Social Inclusion Project services were delivered for a limited period of time and since 2016 they are functioning within a long lasting project funded by The Human Resources Development Operational Programme.

The main goal of the Project is prevention of social exclusion and reducing poverty rates by investing in early childhood services. Its aim is to ensure support for vulnerable children (including children with developmental delay or disabilities) up to 7 years of age and their families through better health care, training of parenting skills, additional educational support and prevention of institutionalization and school drop-out.

The provided by the project services are integrated – social, educational and medical, and they combine different type of teams, according to local municipal needs and target groups. The municipality is the official provider of the whole complex of services which can include the following: *Parenting skills’ training and development, Family counselling and support; Early intervention and Individual educational support for children with disabilities; Children health consultancy; Additional educational support for equal start at school and Family centre for children aged 0-3.*

One of the important Project activities is promotion of healthy nutrition of babies and children so they can reach their full potential in both

physical and psychological development, including prevention of illness and cognitive delay due to malnutrition, stimulating early attachment and prevention of abandonment, healthy feeding since birth according to latest scientific recommendations and change of old practices such as early weaning for example.

In Veliko Tarnovo municipality the integrated early childhood services are named “TSAREVGRAD” Community centre for children and parents, and offer the full set of activities and teams of specialists as follows:

➤ **Parenting skills’ training and development, Family counselling and support:** a psychologist, 2 social workers, 2 mediators, a lawyer a nurse, a pediatrician, an obstetrician and a midwife. The medical specialist and the lawyer are working part-time for the Centre. This team provides individual consultation and group work for future parents and families with children up to 7 years, including mobile services in the municipality villages and small towns. They aim to support parents in everyday child care, family problems solving and developing social and life skills for better integration in the society.

➤ **Early intervention and Individual educational support for children with disabilities:** a social worker, a mediator, a psychologist, a speech therapist, a special pedagogue, a physical rehabilitator and a part-time pediatrician. This team’s aim is to prevent abandonment of children with disabilities or developmental delay by supporting families to stimulate child development and by helping children for reach their full potential.

➤ **Children health consultancy:** a fully part-time working team of a mediator, a nurse, a dentist and a pediatrician. They consult children and families on health issues and provide health services in small towns and villages in the municipality with no pediatrician and child dentist.

➤ **Additional educational support for equal start at school** is a 2-months service, delivered in the summer by a pedagogue and a mediator for children with educational/ cognitive/developmental delay or disability. They aim to develop skills and knowledge needed in the first grade of primary school education so children could adapt successfully.

➤ **Family centre for children aged 0-3** is a supportive service delivered by a nurse and two childcarers. It is a place where children can stay

while the parents have individual or group sessions in the Centre or a place for step-by-step adaptation to kindergarten/nursery. It proved to be especially effective in this areas for children with developmental delay/disability. The family centre is also a way of supporting parents in difficult economic situation by day care and included lunch for their children.

“TSAREVGRAD” Community centre for children and parents is the only early childhood centre in Bulgaria that offers an additional support for its clients – breastfeeding counselling. It is provided by a consultant, certified by National Association for Breastfeeding Support after 1,5 year of personal experience in breastfeeding, 45 hours specialized training and a certification exam.

The National Association for Breastfeeding Support is one of two big NGOs, dedicating their efforts to promoting breastfeeding and supporting women to breastfeed through a net of volunteers. Their mission is also to inform society about and to influence public attitudes towards breastfeeding as a natural integrative part of caring parental practices (<http://www.podkrepa-zakarmene.com/about>).

According to the last national survey of The National Centre for Public Health and Analyses only 10,4 % of all newborns’ breastfeeding starts in the first hour after birth, exclusively breastfed between 4th and 6th months after birth are 18,6% of all the infants, and after the 6th month 46% of babies are breastfed alongside with the weaning

https://ncpha.government.bg/post/2021-07-30-pri-10-4-ot-novorodenite-kurmeneto-zapochva-prez-purvia-chas-484.html?fbclid=IwAR0Ju2C8dMAxieu5rbfSpfpoNBT_oO9qL7QDjpkEJtKZM8xn16INURz2CWk

These data are due to the lack of support in hospitals and infant health consultancy and old information and practices about breastfeeding widely spread even among health professionals and in public. In the last decades it is also a result of the total neglect of The International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and the aggressive policy of substitutes’ local providers.

The breastfeeding consultant in the “TSAREVGRAD” Community centre for children and parents is a volunteer and works within the concept

and principles of both the Centre and The National Association for Breastfeeding Support offering services according to her own competences. Having a broad experience in child and family counselling in variety of social services as a social worker, psychologist, trainer and a supervisor, and after discussion with the municipality and The Association, the breastfeeding services are included in the range of activities of the Community centre. They come in two main forms: individual sessions for pregnant women and mothers of infants and monthly group meetings with open access. Being the manager of the team up to 2019 gives an additional opportunity to influence other members' attitude towards breastfeeding through delivering scientific information on the topic in everyday discussions. Below are shown the results of breastfeeding consultant's work up to 2021. It is important to notice that since 2021 two more breastfeeding consultants certified by The National Association for Breastfeeding Support are working with the "TSAREVGRAD" Community centre, which gives opportunity for broader range of activities in promoting and supporting breastfeeding.

On team and service level:

- A breastfeeding friendly service - the "TSAREVGRAD" Community centre is a place where mothers can freely breastfeed at any time or anywhere, regardless the child's age. Breastfeeding mothers are not criticized for their decisions about breastfeeding by anyone of the team members.
- The whole team is very well informed about breastfeeding and have mutual understanding about its benefits – including medical staff, psychologist, driver of the bus and hygienist. Breastfeeding is widely discussed between the staff of all the services without any judgement and prejudice.
- Every family have access to the breastfeeding consultant, no matter what their other needs are and what services they use. Any staff member can refer a family to the breastfeeding consultant. The consultant works both in the centre and also in the homes of clients, according to the National Association for Breastfeeding Support standards to provide support in the everyday environment of mother and baby. She also works as a part of the main service team, giving feedback to other specialist and taking part

in evaluating and planning of the services for the particular family or providing supervision when needed.

- The service provides evidence-based information about breastfeeding for the community in collaboration with the National Association for Breastfeeding Support on its Facebook page and through annual events in The World Breastfeeding Week.

Group “Breastfeeding meetings” are systematically organized and they are absolutely free for access to anyone interested in any aspect of breastfeeding. Here is the number of the held meetings and their participants:

- 2017 – 7 meetings, 27 participants;
- 2018 – 8 meetings, 45 participants;
- 2019 – 3 meetings, 9 participants;
- 2020 – 2 meetings, 14 participants;
- 2021 – 1 meeting, 13 participants.

The total number is 21 meetings with 108 participants.

Individual counselling is the other main activity of the breastfeeding consultants in the “TSAREVGRAD” Community centre. For 5-years period from 2016 up to 2021 a total number of 30 sessions are provided. Annually they are represented below:

- 2016: 1 session;
- 2017: 10 sessions;
- 2018: 4 sessions;
- 2019: 9 sessions;
- 2021: 6 sessions.

Another important way of promoting breastfeeding is the annual event dedicated to The World Breastfeeding Week (WBW). It is celebrated in different ways every year: with group meetings on special topics according to the theme and slogan of the particular WBW, days of “open doors” for individual counselling, spreading information about breastfeeding in public, etc. In 2021 due to the availability of three volunteering consultants it became possible to combine group meeting with time and private space for individual counselling.

Discussion

Looking at the goals of the “TSAREVGRAD” Community centre for children and parents and The National Association for Breastfeeding Support we can definitely say that breastfeeding consultant is a valuable specialist in the integrated early childhood services. Breastfeeding is the basis of health and rational nutrition for all our life and the best way to feed the baby. It is especially important for premature born babies and those with health issues or disabilities. Breastfeeding ensures not only that the baby receives the ideal food for his/her individual needs, but it is also a way of developing secure attachment, reduces stress in mother and child and supports cognitive development. It is really a natural “magic” process, given to us to provide the best start of human life. For children in very poor families it is the most effective way to prevent malnutrition in at least first year after birth. So it is crucial that all the women have access to professional support for breastfeeding as part of available and free community services.

The outlined above numbers of group meetings and individual counselling sessions show that this opportunity is welcomed by pregnant women and new mothers. The Corona crises had a destroying effect on the possibilities to organize group meetings and community information campaigns. Yet we view it as a challenge to establishing new ways of reaching women that need breastfeeding support which can be used as permanent part of the consultants’ services.

The dynamics in numbers from year to year show that it is very important to provide different forms of services, so they can fit the needs of various groups: pregnant women, women with children with special needs, women with common health issues such as Hashimoto disease, new mothers who don’t have any experience in childrearing and with no support from their families who have more complex needs, mothers of premature born babies, etc. Some of the planned group meetings became individual sessions instead because only one mother visited the Centre with a particular issue. Having more than one consultant broadens the range of services that can be provided in early childhood centre at one hand, and on the other it creates a community of specialists with mutual understanding of breastfeeding and

shared goals. Such a community can be used in different ways: as a supporting network for case discussions, for generating new ideas and implementing new practices in the field, for multidisciplinary work and referral to proven and trustworthy professionals in various areas.

Conclusion

Having in mind the above presented results we conclude that the main hypothesis of the research is accomplished in a positive way. We can also think of some future challenges for the breastfeeding consultants in early childhood services in Veliko Tarnovo:

- To restore individual and monthly group sessions in-person and to establish a sustainable practice for on-line counselling;
- To have consultants that are more qualified for special cases in breastfeeding;
- To establish new collaborations with different medical specialist on municipal level so to ensure pregnant women and new mothers have relevant and trustful information about available breastfeeding support;
- To have more active information community campaigns about breastfeeding and its benefits.

Looking at the data on breastfed babies in the country we can make the overall conclusion that every early childhood service needs at least one well informed and adequately trained in breastfeeding specialist so more babies are fed according to the WHO recommendations.

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2. <http://www.podkrepa.zakarmene.com/about>

ASSESSING THE NEEDS AND ABILITIES OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

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Abstract

In the last two-decade literature has shown a growth of different standardized test that assess the needs and abilities of children with ASD (autistic spectrum disorder). Nevertheless, these test are not applied and adapted in every country, such as North Macedonia. For this purpose, we conducted a research with four children, two with autism, one with unknown developmental delay and one typically developing child, by using Childhood Autism Rating Scale (CARS, Schopler 1980) which is a **15-item observation-based rating scale designed to accurately differentiate children with** autism from those with developmental delays without features of autism. The **main objective** of the research was to determine if there is a difference between autistic children and children with typical development or any other disorder as assessed by CARS., adapted version. The results showed that this test performed difference between autistic children and typically children in almost every field of observation, however it didn't performed difference between the children with low functioning autism in two areas, emotional response and verbal communication, which are generally most affected areas of children with low functioning autism.

Based on the results, we can underline the importance of use of these test as initial assessment of children with ASD in our country, and we should seek for adapting them in the context of the country where is applied.

Keywords: ASD, CARS, observation, tests.

Introduction

Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by disorders in socialization and communication. This is a spectrum of disorders in which each child is unique, and thus the term autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is used in many countries. Individuals with autism often exhibit difficulties in social judgment, such as in establishing appropriate social behavior (Carpenter, Pennington, & Rogers, 2002). Deficiencies in their ability to reciprocally and appropriately and direct fluent social interaction can have adversely declining effects, as a result, they often tend to exhibit out-of-context behaviors that can affect the flow of thoughts during social communication with a partner (Lahiri, 2020). It is called developmental disability because it begins before the age of three, in the developmental period, and causes delays or problems in many different ways in which a person develops and grows¹⁸ (Parker & Parker, 2002). With a scale of 1 in 150 in India, 1 in 59 in the United States (CDC) and 1 in 100 in the United Kingdom (National Statistics Survey), creating effective intervention services to address the skills deficits that characterize autism can be considered a clinical and public health problem. Autism is more likely to be present in boys than in girls¹⁹. However, for families with one child with autism, the risk of having another child with autism increases by 4 percent. In addition, there is a 4 to 6 percent risk that a sibling of a child with autism will have some sort of developmental problem or milder autism spectrum. This means that 10% of siblings of children with autism have some state of the autism spectrum (Heather Barnett Veague, 2009).

Individuals with autism have difficulty with imitation, imaginative play, and nonverbal communication — three categories of behavior that are sometimes considered as examples of communication deficits and sometimes as social deficits (APA, 2013). The most prototypical examples of social deficits relate to reciprocity, such as the requirement to share pleasure (e.g., getting parents to see the new Lego construction), real feelings of concern and comfort of another person, and formation of warm societies that go beyond arranged

¹⁸ National Association of Autism <https://www.autism.org.uk/>

¹⁹ Adapted from the International Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/autism/facts/index.htm>

interactions in the classroom and with parents (Moldin & Rubenstein, 2006). In fact, difficulty with shared attention is probably considered the truest scheme that marks autism as different from other developmental disorders (Moldin & Rubenstein, 2006). Diverse theories have attempted to account for cognitive social deficits through concepts such as lack of central coherence (Frith & Hill, 2003), lack of theory of mind (Baron-Cohen, 2001), and deficits in executive functioning (Ozonoff, 1995). Specific deficits in shared attention, implicit learning, imitation, memory, and other aspects of information processing are proposed (Moldin & Rubenstein, 2006). Many children on the autism spectrum experience difficulties in sensory processing that affects their learning, behavior, and daily functioning. We receive sensory information from seven different senses and effective sensory processing is necessary for us to make the appropriate response through behavior. Primary data from people with autism have made us aware that some or all of their senses may be distorted or disturbed for some time or all the time (Moldin & Rubenstein, 2006). Motor phases are delayed in over 33% of cases (Calhoun & Mayes, 2007). Gait disturbances such as walking on toes (Kielinen, Rantala, Timonen, Linna, & Moilanen, 2004) and problems with balance and coordination have been documented. In a more detailed analysis, Minshew et al. showed the presence of significant abnormalities in body posture in children with ASD (Minshew, Sung, Jones, & Furman, 2004; Moldin & Rubenstein, 2006). Diagnostic practices differ in terms of the scope and depth of the assessment procedures as well as the team of professionals involved. The most common practice involves reliance on the report from the family coupled with behavioral observations during traditional office visits to formulate a diagnosis. The purpose of evaluating a comprehensive diagnosis is in four parts: (1) evaluating the child's unique profiles such as strengths and weaknesses; (2) providing a diagnostic clarification; (3) providing recommendations for treatment planning; (4) identify additional assessments that are needed such as genetics, neurology, and / or vision and hearing examinations, as well as referrals to additional specialists (e.g., nutrition, sleep). A comprehensive assessment preferably requires a multi- or interdisciplinary approach. Various professionals, including psychologists, social workers, speech and language pathologists - and where it may or may

be needed - occupational therapists, psychiatrists, developmental pediatricians, and / or neurologists are involved (Goldstein & Ozonoff, 2018).

In North Macedonia, there are two institutions that assess children with Autistic Disorder, Child Clinic and [Institution of Mental Health](#) and [Child Clinic](#), were they use different assessment tools. However, as a researcher we seek to provide different approach in the field of assessment.

Methodology and results

Utilizing various literature on assessing children on the autism spectrum, as well as reviewing relevant research, our research objective was on assessing the needs and abilities of children with autism, as well as the differences that appear during the assessment between the typical child, the child with speech impediments and children with autism spectrum through case studies. The case study method enables a researcher to closely examine data within a specific context. In most cases, a case study method selects a small geographical area or a very limited number of individuals as study subjects. Case studies, at their core, explore and study cases as a research method to investigate the contemporary real-life phenomenon through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships. Yin, defines the method of case study as "an empirical research that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly visible; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (Yin, 1989). In contrast to experimental models, which seek to test a specific hypothesis through deliberate manipulation of the environment (as, for example, in a randomly controlled trial giving a new drug to randomly selected individuals and then comparing the results with controls), the case study approach lends itself well to capturing information on the most explanatory questions "how", "what" and "why", such as "how is field intervention being implemented and obtained?" (Crowe, Creswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery, & Sheikh, 2011). Based on our objective we yielded the following research question: 1. Is there a difference between autistic children and children with typical development or any other disorder as assessed by CARS?, Is there a greater difference in CARS assessment in children with

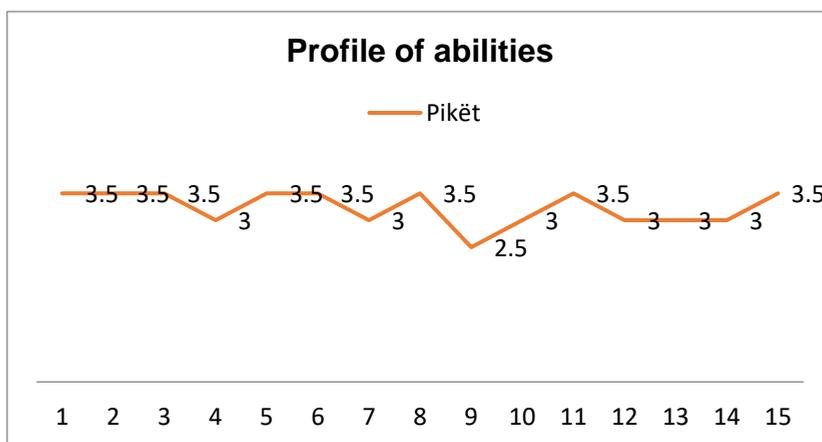
autism in the areas of communication, emotional development and adaptation to change? To answer these questions, 4 children were included, two of whom have autism, one with typical development and one with speech impairments. The children were observed in the kindergarten where the research was conducted and 4 parents of the children and 3 educators were interviewed. For our research, an international instrument called the Childhood Autism Assessment Scale was used, which is a 15-item observational assessment scale designed to accurately distinguish children with autism from those with developmental delays without features of autism. CARS is intended to be used by highly trained assessors in the context of a broader multi-method approach that includes behavioral observations, interviews of primary caregivers, assessment of intellectual functioning, and detailed developmental and family histories (Schopler, Reichler, DeVellis, Daly, & Kenneth, 1980). Assessors should base their assessments on the frequency, intensity, duration, and atypicality of the specified behavior, taking into account the chronological age of the child. Each of the 15 items is rated on a seven-point scale (1, 1.5, 2 ... 4) ranging from "within normal limits for that age", which is coded as one, to "extremely abnormal for that age", which is coded as four (Schopler, Reichler, DeVellis, Daly, & Kenneth, 1980). As stated in CARS, these features are evaluated: relationships with people, imitation, emotional response, use of the body, use of the facility, adapting to change, visual response, listening response, response and use of taste-smell-touch, fear and nervousness, verbal communication, nonverbal communication, level of activity, level and consistency of intellectual response, general impressions (Caldwell, 2011).

Results

Results were calculated with simple descriptive statistic, and they are presented for each child separately. As can be seen from chart 2.1-1, this child scored 3.5 points in the first domain which is the relationship to people domain, 3.5 points in the imitation domain, 3.5 points for emotional response, 3 points in the domain of body use, 3.5 points in the object use domain, 3.5 points in the adaptation to change domain, the child scored 3 points in the visual response domain, 3.5 points in the listening response domain, 2.5 points in the domain of taste, smell and touch response and use, 3 points in

the fear and anxiety domain, 3.5 points in the verbal communication domain and 3 points in the nonverbal communication domain, the child scored 3 points in the activity level domain and 3 points in the level and consistency of intellectual response, and at last for the general impressions domain the child scored 3.5 points. In addition, the first child scored 48.5 points in total in all the domains included in the Childhood Autism Rating Scale, which results with severe autism based on CARS.

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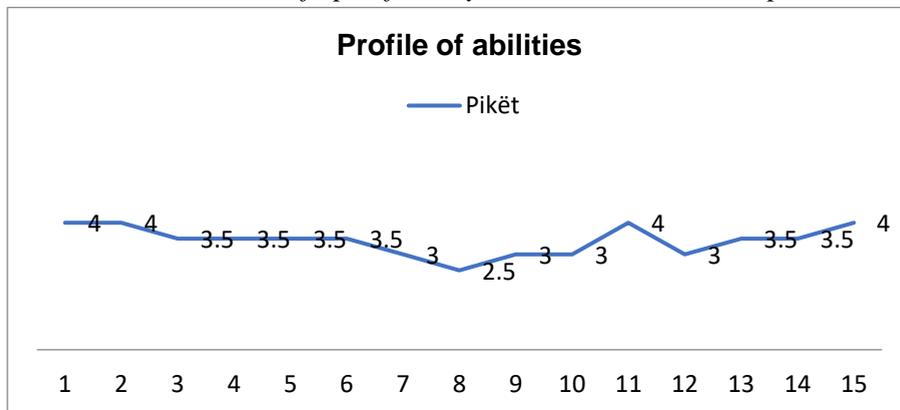


CARS evaluation data for each field

Child number two, presented in the chart 2.1-2, performed with 4 points in the domain of relationship to people which is the first domain, 4 points in the domain of imitation, 3.5 points in the emotional response domain, 3.5 points in the body use domain, 3.5 points in the object use domain, and again 3.5 points in the domain of adaptation to change, the child scored 3 points in the visual response domain, 2.5 points in the listenin response domain, 3 points in the domain of taste, smell and touch response and use, 3 points in the fear and anxiety domain, 4 points in the verbal communication domain and 3 points in the nonverbal communication domain, 3.5 points in the activity level domain, and 3.5 points in the level and consistency of intellectual response domain, and in the general impressions domain the child scored 4 points. In addition, the child scored a total of 51.5

points, which results with severe autism based on CARS.

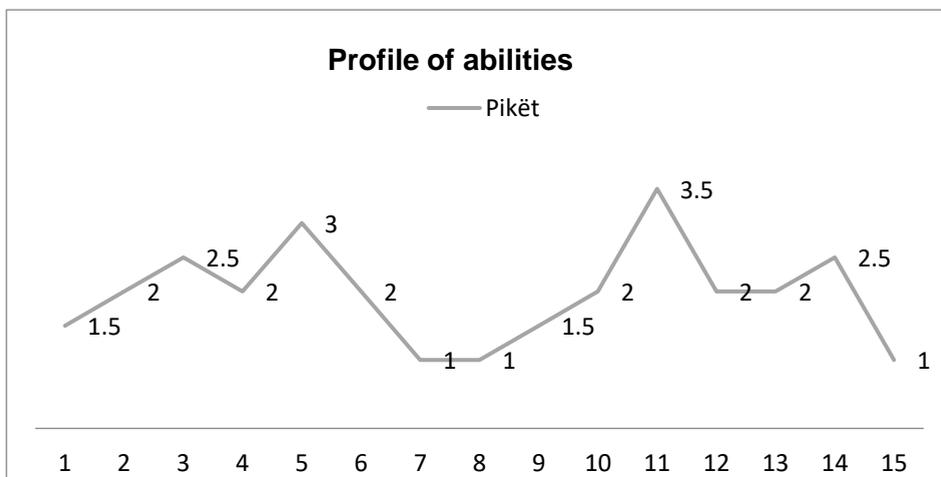
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evaluation data for each field

Child number three, presented in chart 2.1-3, performed with 1.5 points in the first domain which is relationship to people, 2 points in the imitation domain, 2.5 points in the emotional response domain, 2 points in the body use domain, 3 points in the object use domain, 2 points in the adaptation to change domain, 1 point in the visual response domain and 1 point in the listening response domain, 1.5 points in the taste, smell and touch response and use domain, 2 points in the fear and anxiety domain, 3.5 points in the verbal communication domain and 2 points in the nonverbal communication domain, 2 points in the activity level domain, 2.5 points in the level and consistency of intellectual response domain, and at last the child scored 1 points in the general impressions domain. In addition, the third child scored a total of 29.5 points, which results that the child does not have autism based on CARS.

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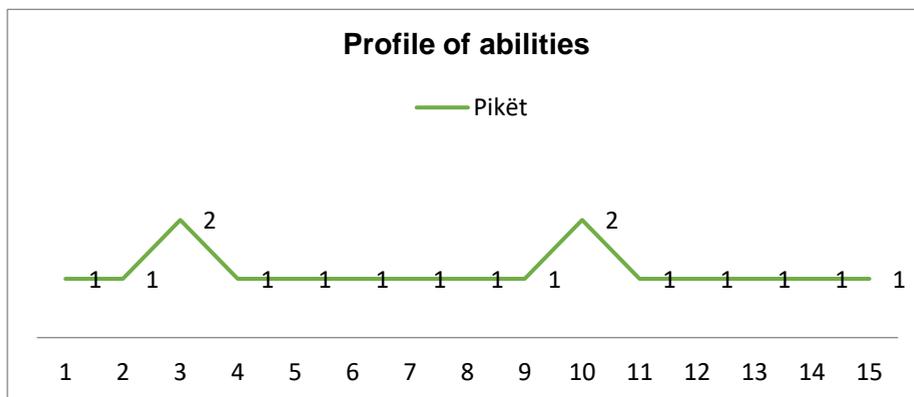


evaluation data for each field

The fourth and last child presented in chart 2.1-4, performed with 1 point in the first domain which is relationship to people, 1 point in the imitation domain, 2 points in the emotional response domain, 1 point in the domain of body use, 1 point in the fifth domain which is object use domain, 1 point in the adaptation to change domain, 1 point in the visual response domain and 1 point in the listening response domain, 1 point in the taste, smell and touch response and use domain, 2 points in the fear and anxiety domain, the child scored 1 point in the verbal communication domain and 1 point in the nonverbal communication domain, 1 point in the activity level domain, 1 point in the level and consistency of intellectual response domain, and 1 point in the last domain which in general impressions. In addition, the child scored 17 points in total, which resultst as a non-autistic child based on CARS. The last child also has the lower score compared to the other children included in the

study.

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evaluation data for each field

Discussion

The sample of test subjects consists of children with different abilities. Two children scored the highest and approximate points in the Autism Assessment Scale in Childhood, one of which scored 51.5 points, while the other child scored 48.5 points. Which means that they belong to the subgroup of children with a higher degree of autism, the third child scored 29.5 points, which means that it is close to the limit of autism (30 points) and belongs to the subgroup of children who do not have autism, this child shows some forms of behavior that are suspected of another disorder. The fourth child scored 17 points and belongs to the subgroup of children who do not have autism.

The highest number of points (worst results) was achieved by children in the verbal communication scale with 12 points, in the emotional reactions scale with 11.5 points and in the adjustment scale in changes with 11 points. This is immediately followed by the imitation rate of 10.5 points, the relationship with other people (10 points), the use of objects (10 points), fear and anxiety (10 points) and the consistency of cognitive reactions (10 points).

The best results were achieved in the rate of response to visual stimuli (8 points) and the rate of response to auditory stimuli (8 points).

The child who scored less (17 points, not autistic) showed very good results in all areas compared to other children. One child from the group, as mentioned earlier was not diagnosed as a child with autism and he showed slightly better results than the two children diagnosed with autism (29.5 points, non-autistic) suspected of having another disorder that is not type of autism spectrum. The other two children scored very high (51.5 and 48.5 points), which supports the claim that this rating scale well discriminates between autism subgroups and other developmental disorders (Chlebowski, Green, Barton, & Fein, 2013).

Conclusion and further implication

In our practice, the ability to diagnose and assess the abilities and needs of children with autism is limited to a small number of psychometric instruments (AAMD Adaptive scale created for children with mental retardation, PEP-R, AAPEP). Not all the instruments listed are intended exclusively for the population of people with autism, so it was considered useful to translate the Childhood Autism Assessment Scale (CARS) and which can also be applied experimentally, which was then made possible by be used for internal needs such as assessing autism in preschool children.

During this research the assessment of children's needs and abilities were assessed based on data collected from different sources (parents, educators) and from different situations that bring objective results. At the end of the research we were able to provide answers to the research questions posed above. Based on the first research question we found that there are differences between autistic children and children with typical development and children with speech disorders, those differences can be observed in almost all areas included in CARS. With this in mind we can conclude that the Childhood Autism Assessment Scale is a useful tool to distinguish children with autism from children with typical development and children with other disabilities, as it did in some research (Chlebowski, Green, Barton, &

Fein, 2013; Coplan & Jawad, 2005). Regarding the second research question, if there are large differences between children with autism with low function in the field of communication, in the field of emotional reactions and in the field of verbal communication, we found that there are no major differences between children with autism with low function in the mentioned areas. Looking at the results it can be seen that those areas are almost equally affected by autism in both children, it means that both children have inappropriate development of emotional reactions, great difficulty in communication where one child does not speak at all while the other rarely emits only one voice, as well as great difficulties in adapting to changes are observed in both children almost equally (Coplan & Jawad, 2005; Chlebowski, Green, Barton, & Fein, 2013).

In addition, based on these results, we can suggest for further implementation of CARS in a larger group of sample as a test instrument in our country, since this research was limited on very small sample, and even though it depicted CARS assessment values, the reliability will be higher.

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**EARLY INTERVENTION AND PSYCHO-PHYSICAL
DEVELOPMENT OF A CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN
THE MUNICIPALITY OF VRAPÇISHT**

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Abstract

Being a child with social needs makes the child special in every aspect of living, including education. Children with Down syndrome as such group encounter many challenges in the development process. Early intervention generally improves psycho physical development of them, however it depends on many factors the benefits of it. In Republic of North Macedonia, there is a system of early intervention, hence to have a better perspective of how this system works, we conducted a survey in the Municipality of Vrapçisht. The goal of our research was to analyze the perception of five parents of children with Down syndrome regarding the intervention system in this country, starting with diagnosis, inclusion in realy intervention progra, progres and education. It was used the protocol of semistructured interview to have in depth attitudes of parents.

The results showed that although the children are with the same diagnosis and have had various health problems such as problems with the heart, breathing, development, etc., the intervention did not affect everyone equally. In addition, they empahsized the lack of more professional treatment in their local community, since the main centers are located in the capital city. Thus,

there is a need of net for early intervention that includes centers for treatment as nearby as possible.

Keywords: *Down syndrome early intervention, parents, interview.*

Introduction

The term early intervention means the process of informing, counseling, educating and supporting parents and children in the early period in whom it is proven that there is a high risk of further development (Tomris, 2020). One of the problems that arises with the use of the term early intervention is the term itself. Early can be interpreted in two ways: early in life and early in making the diagnosis. Children with disability or at risk to be disabled are qualified for early childhood intervention as well as partly children in the context of social disadvantage families (Pretis, 2009)

Early intervention programs use procedures that come from different fields such as: Medicine, education, rehabilitation, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, psychology, speech therapy, etc. Respectively, definitions describing the early childhood intervention include from stable or ad hoc trans-disciplinary teams helping the child, to specific professional profiles. (Pretis, 2012) Parental involvement in therapeutic procedures with children is also important because it allows positive predictions to be formed about the parent and child, obtaining the necessary information, gaining the ability to teach their child, and saving time. Regarding children with Down syndrome, which generally have delays in communicative abilities (Pejovic, Cruz, Severino, & Frota, 2021), motor skills and cognition, early intervention can help in many ways. During the first three to four months of life, for example, an infant is expected to gain head control and the ability to pull to a sitting positions (with help) with no head lags and enough strength in the upper torso to maintain an erect posture. Appropriate physical therapy may assist a baby with Down syndrome, who may have low muscle tone, in achieving this milestone. Well-designed interventions focusing on the foundation skills for language are needed to improve language outcomes for children with Down Syndrome (Stojanovik, et al., 2021) Physical therapy and practice in achieving these and subsequent milestones can assist a baby with Down syndrome in the four areas of development. Early intervention can also

prevent a child with Down syndrome from reaching a plateau at some point in development. Thus, the goal of early intervention programs is to enhance and accelerate development by building on a child's strengths and by strengthening those areas that are weaker, in all areas of development. (Info, 2008). There is a scientific consensus regarding the effects of early childhood intervention upon the child's development and the family dynamics (Pretis, 2012). In North Macedonia, during pandemic was created an online [Online early intervention services for children with disabilities and developmental delays](#), for parents and caregivers of children with developmental delays and children with disabilities from 0 to 6 years in order to offer families an access to early intervention services and online psycho-social support, including children with Down syndrome. In addition, this online support is not a direct supervision of the child progress like it can be with telehealth (Tudella, Riberio de Silva, & dos Anjos Vasconcelos, 2021), thus the impact of this online support it remains to be seen.

However, as can be seen from the date, this is a new tool created to helps the parents, hence we were intrigued to investigate how the system worked till now, respectively to analyze the detection, treatment and benefits of early intervention programs for children with Down syndrome based on study cases, and the results will emphasize pros and cons of the system, since there are methodological issues that can measure exactly the impact of early intervention programs in general (Pretis, 2000).

Methodology and results

Based on the literature review of documentation in North Macedonia, consulting professionals included in early intervention program, we defined the **objective** of our research, to detect pros and cons of early intervention system for children with Down syndrome in terms of early detection, treatment services and family programs based on parents' perception. Thus the research questions were based on three themes: early detection, treatment services and family program, as following:

1. What kind of early detection process the parents went through for the child?
2. What kind of treatment services they were included?
3. What kind of parental/family program they were included?

It was a qualitative type of research, we used semi structured protocol of interview with parents of children with DS. The advantage of using qualitative methods is that they generate rich, detailed data that leave the participant perspective intact, and provide multiple contexts for understanding the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2009). We interviewed five parents that were all included in some kind of early intervention program, they were filmed while interviewed and then the data were transcribed and analyzed with coding interim, respectively their answers were grouped based on the theme.

Results

The analysis of the semi structured interviews included: defining concepts; mapping the range, nature and dynamics of phenomena; creating typologies; finding association and seeking explanations. We used codes aligned with the research questions to create themes, and within each theme, several subthemes emerged from the answers with similar meaning.

How did you find out that your child has this problem and when did you find out?

-From birth I have noticed that something is wrong with the baby. His physical appearance made us suspect that it was Down Syndrome then after consulting the doctor, the child was diagnosed with this Syndrome.

-One month after the birth, when I sent her to the doctor for a check-up, they told me that she had Down Syndrome.

Where was the first place you sent your child for intervention?

-When I found out that the girl was ill, I sent her to the hospitals because she also had problems with her heart and breathing.

-I sent him to a specialist every month until he did 6 months, then every 3 months - 6 months then every year. From the age of 3 he started walking.

How did you hear about special education services?

-Since it was obvious that the child was not fit for normal school we became interested in special education services.

-A relative told us about some centers that offer treatment for this kind of children.

How do you evaluate the support you have received from various sources?

-The conditions are not suitable enough, but from the impossibility to send it to a more suitable place, the place where we send it at the moment is enough for us.

-There are lack of some condition, however the personnel treat them very well, they try to give their best for our children and I am happy that they exist.

-They are very far, so at least one of us should not work in order to send the child.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of the program presented to your child?

-The personnel was very kind and helpful, however there is a lack of state services in our city, so we are obliged to pay private for extra services for our child.

-There are not all the services included in the state services, so if we need a physical therapist and a speech therapist, one will be on state services and the other private.

How much has this intervention helped your child, have there been any noticeable improvements?

-If we included the child in more activities we believe that would have more improvements, however it has helped very much.

-The physical treatment was very helpful, however the cognitive and psychological support, since it was very late included, it didn't help him so much.

-To what extend were you involved in the treatment of your child?

-None, we just send the child to the treatment centers, and we didn't get any directions or trainings how to work at home.

-Nobody informed us how to work with our child, we used internet and friend acquaints for suggestion on how to work with our child.

Discussion and conclusion

Discussing over qualitative results based on interview is a complex process that requires unbiased interpretation of the answers. For that reason, the interview process was video-taped in order to have possibilities to rewind several times the answers and be certain about the correct coding. The results depicted three main problems of the early intervention system in North Macedonia. Considering that this research has been conducting in rural area,

parents generally described as a late diagnosis of the condition, because all the parents underlined that their child was diagnosed after birth, which implies that they didn't undergo the pre-natal screening procedure. Pre-natal screening procedure is procedure that the obstetrician counsel the patient to do while pregnant in the first three semester, however it is questionable why our participants didn't do it. The second theme was dedicated to treatment services, including physical, speech therapy and psycho cognitive therapy, and generally parents perception and experience was positive with the quality of the services, but not with the quantity, respectively they emphasized the lack of some services provided by the state, and the organization of these services. For instance, it was a problem for them to not receive all the services in one spot, physical treatment, cognitive and psychosocial treatment, and speech therapy. For this reason, they would have to spend all day travelling from one service to other service, and not all of them were state services. The third topic, family involvement on children rehabilitation process, unfortunately parents involved in this research pointed the fact that they were never involved, and literature explicitly emphasize the importance of parents involvement (Mohammed Nawi, Ismail, & Abdullah, 2013; Mahoney & Perales, 2018). In the mention research, family outcomes among parents of Down syndrome children who receive early intervention is better, 67.3 percent, compared to parents of Down syndrome children who receive late intervention, 41.4 percent.

Further implication

In North Macedonia, the target group of the attended children in early intervention program is changing, due to country wide pre-natal developmental screening that enables most of the foetuses with possible developmental risks or established disabilities are aborted, which means that children with pre- natal detection slowly disappear. However, based on the facilities of neo-natal intensive care the number of severely disabled children in the services has been increasing, and it can be observed all over Europe ad developed countries (Pretis, 2009). Regarding children with Down syndrome, the survey depicted the late period of diagnosis, which is lack of mandatory early screening procedure, not of lack of screening, and presence of treatment but not all of them in one place, and lack of parental

involvement. With our research we aimed to reveal the trends changing from past to present with regard to early intervention studies performed for young children with DS and their families in the world, even though it was limited only to five subjects, but all of them from rural areas. There is a need of state net of early intervention that will connect the obstetrician and pediatrics for early detection, continuing with internal communication with rehabilitation services that will provide all services in one place, and will create direct contacts parents. These services will provide trainings to parents and involve them in every activity of their child while planning the program for further education of their child, since early stimulation bring benefits on the motor and cognitive development of children with Down syndrome in interdisciplinary care (de Oliveira, et al., 2018).

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ISSUES OF LEARNING AND ACQUISITION DURING EARLY CHILDHOOD, AGE: 0-3 YEARS OLD

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The importance of learning during early childhood

Numerous studies in the field of education have concluded that children with access to early and quality education are better prepared for their future compared to those children who have been denied this access. The latter have shortcomings in expression, in writing and report problems in terms of relationships they establish with others in adulthood. Meanwhile, children who have access to early and quality education, have a richer vocabulary, better communication, social skills, more positive relationships with classmates and have a higher willingness to be educated. It is therefore important that adults pay close attention to their children's educational issues.

The importance of education since early childhood is one of the essential elements in order to achieve a successful learning of children. Likewise, early childhood education determines the personal development of children. (European Commission, 2014). This is one of the reasons why the issue of education of children 0-3 years old is today one of the most important and most discussed issues at the national and international level in terms of policy making and research in this field.

When we talk about education issues for children 0-3 years old, we generally refer to the nursery service that these children can provide. In the past, caring for children aged 0-3 prevailed over educational aspects. Primary for the children were issues of physical security, emotional as well as health care for them, while education was seen as an issue that could be addressed and developed in preschool age (i.e. after the age of 3 years).

Nowadays, the education of children aged 0-3 is seen with the same interest as their health and emotional care. This is because studies of recent decades and not only, have widely shown that the process of child learning

begins at an earlier age than preschool education. There are even researchers who claim that while the baby is still in the womb, he may have learning experiences, experiences that he enriches when he comes to life, which are provided to them through adults who care for them, be it their parents, legal guardians, other family members or kindergarten educators.

Guiding, orienting and supporting children with adults (Parents, educators, legal guardians), is the core of children's success in the learning process. They, the children, approach the learning process in different ways. This is also related to the ways in which children learn and not to what they should learn. Children by nature are curious and want to explore all the time.

The purpose of early childhood education is to activate the natural curiosity of the child. If the learning process takes place through didactic games and various activities such as drawing, music, reading, nature walks, etc., then children are enabled cognitive, emotional, social, physical and aesthetic development. Young children, day by day tend to explore the surrounding environment. When we talk about the development of these skills to know the environment, we refer to the set of ways through which children play with their family members (sisters, brothers, parents, legal guardians, etc.) as well as the ways in which they interact with the objects around them.

Involving children in play activities affects the development of their thinking skills and language skills. If in the process of learning, we adults include through didactic games and various activities such as drawing, music, reading, nature walks, etc., cognitive development is realized simultaneously, in addition to the emotional, social, physical, aesthetic, etc. Children also learn in natural ways. They are motivated and curious just as naturally and without straining in the process. This is also the art of education.

The way children behave towards objects, moving them or the attitude they hold towards them is the first moment of their involvement in the activity of playing with objects. The child's motor skills begin to develop day by day. It also increases the child's desire and ability to increase the degree of interaction with objects. This is why education specialists recommend a variety of objects for the purpose of playing and interacting with them. Thus, children begin to learn by observing objects as well as playing with them.

Here are some ideas to help your child learn by playing with a variety of harmless and interesting objects: - At the age of 4 to 5 months, babies can grasp, squeeze and hold objects in their hands. They stare at the captured object. This habit, seemingly simple, prepares the baby to think later with his mind. -

By the age of 9 months, most babies want to understand objects: Shake them, turn them around, try them by colliding with other objects. But they do not yet know the function and use of these objects.

- At the age of 12 months, the baby looks at objects more carefully, especially those he puts in his mouth.

- At the age of 15 - 18 months, the child begins the first attempts to use the objects properly. For example, you can try drinking from a glass.

- At 21 months old, they use more objects together in the right way. For example, the child feeds a doll with a spoon, etc.

- At the age of 24 months, the game becomes more realistic, more real. -

-At the age of 3, the child can see the doll as an imaginary man, talk to him, go for a walk and do chores. "The game is a powerful tool of social development." (Sulstarova A; Sula, G, 2015)

Positive discipline and learning strategy during early childhood

One of the main factors influencing the encouragement of initiative, curiosity and interest to learn, is the positive environment. A positive environment stimulates children to demonstrate high-level initiatives, encourages the construction of questions and enables them to find solutions to various problems. Such an environment enables a positive attitude of children towards learning and ease of learning, skills that they will need in the future in the classroom, school, etc. The way children approach learning depends to a considerable extent on their individual characteristics as well as on other socio-cultural characteristics of the family of which the child belongs.

The level of cooperation with peers is another important factor in the learning process. Children's best learning is those activities that are oriented by adults (educators, parents, legal guardians, etc.) and by children, because children often realize the learning process when the activities are driven by

their experiences and through them and achieve acquire different knowledge by exploring the surrounding environment. In other cases, children learn more easily when activities are stimulated by adults, eg when adults create stimulating situations and children choose them (Shehu, et al., 2014).

However, all children should be given the opportunity to gain their own experiences through the learning process according to the needs and abilities of each. Every child has unique opportunities that need to be encouraged and cared for. Likewise, children's approaches to learning are also related to motivation and behaviors acquired earlier. They need to be constantly motivated in terms of creating spaces and opportunities to apply previously acquired knowledge and turning it into a personal skill. Strengthening these skills helps children learn in the future.

How to help children learn through positive discipline? What is positive discipline? Positive Discipline is a disciplinary model that focuses on the positive aspects of behavior. The initial and basic structure of her education is created in the first three years of life. Opportunities to teach a child discipline begin much earlier than many parents might think, in the very first days of a baby's life.

First, we must first consider respecting the stages of child development.

Secondly, discipline must be tailored to the situation of the children. For example, when children are up to two years old, they should be encouraged to play games and consecutive activities.

Likewise, their attention should be focused on games and new activities. If this attention is not paid, then this is not the right place for these children and the activity encouraged by the adults should be adapted to their needs and interests.

The individual personality traits of each child require different ways of disciplining. Even in cases when children do not show a high level of cooperation with others or do not interact enough with toys, objects, objects, etc., it is still necessary to model their behavior. Cases are also not excluded when children may be involved in situations of misunderstanding or conflict. The way adults help children resolve a conflict is often much more effective and orienting rather than using too many words in the form of advice.

Whether the discipline created is positive or not and whether this model of discipline has the right effectiveness, we understand only if we manage to get answers to the following questions:

- Has the current model really helped the children and are they constantly encouraged?
- Is this encouragement for interaction visible and long-term? Have children's thoughts, feelings, expressions and interactions with the world around them been taken into considerations?
- Do positive discipline enable them to acquire important social and life skills for the future (eg respect, concern for others, problem solving, cooperation, skills that contribute at home, school or community)?
- Do positive discipline invite children to discover how capable they are and are they encouraged to use their personal power and autonomy constructively?

If the answers to the above questions are yes, then we can say that positive discipline is expected to have immediate and long-term effects on children. Thus, developing self-control skills and recognizing one's own impulses poses a challenge to man. If a child is constantly exposed to a positive environment and his activity takes place under a positive discipline, the opportunities to control himself and recognize personal impulses will increase significantly. Likewise, it brings acceptance, recognition of the feelings and reasons that cause them, naming these feelings or expressing them in adulthood. Discovering a sense of altruism, the concept of justice, and the motivation to pursue them are some of the other long-term effects of positive discipline.

Some specific techniques about learning in early childhood

a) Doman-Manichenko method

Nowadays the Doman-Manichenko technique is gaining more and more popularity. The method is based on the method of Glen Doman, an American physiotherapist, who believed that a child's brain activity should be activated at an early age, as according to him, the period of brain growth is the most favorable time to learn effectively.

Glend Doman with his books ("How to Teach Your Child to Read") (Glenn Doman; Janet Doman, 2005)? in 1964 and How to Teach Your Child

Math? 1979), (Glenn Doman; Janet Doman, 2005) shows the ease with which a child can learn to read as well as presents simple steps for teaching mathematics through the development of thinking and reasoning skills. Both books explain how to start and expand each program, how to create and organize the necessary materials, and how to fully develop children's reading and math potentials. This will enable children to understand math and realistically multiply their overall learning potential in preparation for a successful life.

Glenn Doman also thinks that it is possible to develop a program that cultivates a young child's awareness and understanding of the arts, science, and nature — to get to know insects, to learn about the world, to discover the beauty of a painting by Van Gogh and much more.

A familiar concept for Doman is learning cards. With the help of cards from different fields of knowledge, it is possible to develop an interest in educating children and, in this way, to stimulate the early development of children. Doman's early development methodology, adapted by Manichenko, has a number of advantages: Classes conducted from birth contribute to the development of hearing, attention, vision. The duration of a lesson does not exceed a few minutes, even the baby does not have time to get tired and lose interest in the event. The technique was created specifically for home use. It is performed by the parents, which can significantly increase their authority. Technique differences from Glenn Doman's original approach: Unlike Glenn Doman's methodology, which used only teaching cards, special concealment books, gramophones and leaflets are presented here. This significantly increases the effectiveness of learning.

b) Method of Maria Montessori.

One of the important elements of the teaching method proposed by Maria Montessori is play, as the basis of Maria Montessori's pedagogical philosophy. The Montessori method is important because it stems from a combination of sympathy and intuition, social perspective, scientific training, intensive study of educational problems, and the author's unusual experience as a teacher and educational leader (Hunt & Valsiner, 2017).

This method for children can be used in groups and kindergartens, as well as in home schooling. It allows the child to show his or her personal

skills and potential. Education according to the Montessori method (Hunt & Valsiner, 2017), develops creativity, logical thinking, attention, memory and motor skills. Great attention is paid to collective games, during which the baby develops communication skills and independence.

A characteristic feature of the system is that classes are held in groups of different ages. At the same time, younger children do not interfere at all with adults, but rather help them. The author of the system believed that every child is smart and curious by nature, but not everyone gets into a environment that helps to reveal his abilities.

Therefore, the task of an adult is to help the developing child, in the independent knowledge of the world, creating suitable conditions for this. The Maria Montessori method involves accepting the baby as it is. The most important task of an adult is to encourage the child to develop and learn.

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**MONTESSORI PSYCHO-PEDAGOGICAL IDEAS
(REFLECTIONS ON THE BOOK ACQUIRING MIND AND
DISCOVERING THE CHILD)**

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Abstract

In this qualitative description of the pedagogical and psychological ideas of Maria Montessori analyzed in her original, scientific works such as "Acquiring Mind" and "Discovering the Child" we will recall the teaching methodologies, innovative not only for the time they were written, but very important even today for the preparation of early childhood education teachers and preschool education.

In her book 'Discovering the Child,' Montessori explains the role of the teacher, compares it to the work of the observer scientist, studies nature willingly, forgetting himself in his laboratory with the great joy of discovery. But for the teacher that is not enough, because his mission is to study the human, the child and not just his daily habits, but the person when he wakes up in his intellectual life.

"He will actually learn from the child himself the tools and the path for his education, that is, he will learn from the child how to be improved as an educator."

This science-based education would also help in transforming normal children into better people. The duty of education is not only that of observing, but also the "transformation of children"

Montessori's ideas on child psychology lead us to improve education in relation to the constant changes in social life and technology "because in

schools there are abnormal living conditions that highlight features of protection or fatigue, instead of highlighting the expression of key energy aspirations for life

The productivity of education is defined by school as a social institution that in all its areas of teaching must effectively encourage the child to use his forces for social purposes.

If school represents to the child the current life, the lively and real life he leads at home, in the neighborhood or on the playground, as J.Dewey says, then success, logical continuity in educating the attitude towards the world of our children will be guaranteed.

Key words: constructivism, the freedom and independence of the child, active discipline, learning environment, indirect methods.

Introduction

In this qualitative description of the pedagogical and psychological ideas of Maria Montessori analyzed in her original, scientific works such as "Acquiring Mind" and "Discovering the Child" we will recall the teaching methodologies, innovative not only for the time they were written, but very important even today for the preparation of early childhood education teachers and preschool education.

Education sciences have made great strides, but the principles of Montessori's educational methods have been reaffirmed and with it our conviction to believe and apply them. Without perceiving her pedagogical system, the understanding of contemporary child-centered trends in education would not be complete. In her work, she strongly believed that early childhood experience influences the later development of children, therefore education should not only be the imparting of knowledge from the adult generation to the young, but it should also aim at the formation of personality, the development of human potentials for most of them begin with their birth.

One of her ideas emphasized that "The mind of the minor child

changes from our mind...When we accept our limitation to educate him through oral lessons, then the whole concept of education changes. It becomes a matter of providing a suitable environment and not forcing our words into their ears.”

Many scientists, psychologists who have observed children have argued that the first two years are very important in human life. Education during this period should aim to help the development of the inner psychic forces of man, so Montessori insisted on an inner motivation of the child, where everyone will develop according to their own pace and according to their needs. By studying the child nature, she recognized his direct needs to live his own life, to move spontaneously.

General and wider observations have shown that young children are endowed with a special psychic nature, underlines Montessori and this affects the way of education. For thousands of years the real constructive energies, liveliness and dynamism of the child have remained unknown and education has been subjected more to the action of external forces because people have become more concerned with appearance, without knowing and caring for the great possessions hidden inside these human ‘natural resources’.

This is the reason why humanity, since its beginnings, has systematically suppressed these natural energies and has often oriented them violently in ‘selective’ and arbitrary directions. Only in modern times has humanity realized and begun to recognize the importance of these resources.

As Montessori argues in her work *Acquiring Mind*, the first two years shed light on the laws of child psychic construction. It is the child's behavior that reveals its existence. It shows a completely different type of psychology from that of adults. This is where the new path begins. It is not the professor who applies psychology to the child, but it is the child himself who teaches psychology to the professor. Observing this amazing development, it seems as if within the child there is a very scrupulous teacher who teaches him how to achieve these results.

In her book *'Discovering the Child,'* Montessori explains the role of the teacher, compares it to the work of the observer scientist, studies nature willingly, forgetting himself in his laboratory with the great joy of discovery. But

for the teacher that is not enough, because his mission is to study the human, the child and not just his daily habits, but the person when he wakes up in his intellectual life.

The interest in humanity, for anyone who he wants to deal with his education, must be such so as to establish a relationship between people, even closer between the observer and the observed than those created between the zoologist and nature (Montessori, *Discovering of the Child*, 2009, p. 13) This means that the relationship between people is sweeter and simpler that it can be achieved by everyone, not just those who have a privileged soul. Even teachers can very quickly become observers of humanity by learning from the sacrifices of scientists and the feeling of observing all the expressions of little children.

"He will actually learn from the child himself the tools and the path for his education, that is, he will learn from the child how to be improved as an educator." (Montessori, *Discovering the Child*, 2009, p.14) "Today there is an urgent need to revive the methods of education and teaching, whoever fights for this fights for human regeneration" (Montessori, *Discovering the Child*, 2009, p. 24) an appeal that sounds more current today than ever.

Montessori's ideas still have the power of an appeal, which will be very helpful in preparation of contemporary teachers to deal with challenges as a result of school transformation. A new model of school should be built that might allow the development of the spontaneous expressions and personal vitality of the child. "This requires the study and observation of free children, i.e., to study and take care of them, but without trying to changing them" (Montessori, *Discovering the Child*, 2009, p. 25)

This means that we should not start from predetermined ideas on child's pedagogy, but from a methodology that makes us achieve the freedom of children, to derive from the observation of their spontaneous manifestations the true psychology of the child. This method again might be full of big surprises. (Montessori, *Discovering the Child*, 2009, p. 26)

In order to educate children, it is not necessary to behave as they do by playing games or having ordinary conversations. What is important for us is to know how to bring up the man who wanders within their souls.

"I had this feeling and I believe it was not the didactic material, but

this voice of mine calling them, which woke up the children and pushed them to use this didactic material and get educated. I was guided by the great respect for their misfortune and the love that these flawed children know how to arouse in people who approach them "(Montessori, *The Discovery of the Child*, 2009, p. 32)

Encouragement, love, and respect recover and strengthen life. Thanks to Montessori's new experiences working with mentally ill children, they were able to read and write beautifully and pass an exam, together with normal children, performing a miracle based on helping their mental development. Meanwhile the normal children felt suffocated. Analyzing the results achieved in the public school exam, Montessori was concerned about the reasons that drove the happy and healthy children of ordinary schools to so low levels, that even her disabled students could reach the same results in the intelligence tests. Apparently something more needed to be done for normal children.

The teacher had to have a special preparation that touched his feelings, which does not only consist of his intellectual studies but education means connection of souls. The teacher should feel 'respect and sympathy' for the children he educates, typical in the pedagogy of Pestalozzi schools.

"The teacher is the 'linking part' between the child - anxious, numb and depressed - and the educational environment prepared for his or her activity" (Montessori, *Discovering the Child*, 2009, p. 34)

Through her study of the works of Itard, Seguin, etc., Montessori believed in the essence of their method applied to 'disabled' children and built teaching methods in orphanages.

The physiological method that had as a starting point the personal study of the learner and the explanation of physiological and psychic phenomena in the educational processes had to be used for normal children, marking the regeneration of all humanity. (Montessori, *Discovering the Child*, 2009, p. 35)

Montessori, relying on the study of the individual through scientific means and mental tests, had transformed children with disabilities who were expelled from school, into individuals who in schools would face being compared with normal learners, socially useful and educated as intelligent

human beings. This science-based education would also help in transforming normal children into better people. The duty of education is not only that of observing, but also the "transformation of children" (Montessori, *Discovering of the Child*, 2009, p. 37)

New scientific methods must completely change the school and its methods by acquiring a new form of education. Valuable methods, which help the mental development of children with disabilities, can also help the development of all children, in order to create a sound teaching process for any normal creature. Many linguistic difficulties that are assimilated by the children because they have been neglected in the most important periods of their lives, when character and personality are formed, occur in their main activities at the age of 3-6.

The history of opening and developing orphanages in Rome, since January 6th, 1907, which gathered poor children, illiterates, refugees, beggars, etc. is evidence of didactic trials and experiments for educating children according to new methods. The orphanage has been developed as a psychological laboratory where strange things occur, such as the sudden appearance of spontaneous reading and writing, "spontaneous discipline", "free social life", which aroused the curiosity and admiration of the world.

The spread of scientific pedagogy for children shows that education is possible, albeit with some adaptation, in all social classes both with happy children and with ones devastated by seismic destruction and with all the races of the world. The child is the driving force, the banner of our time, which brings new hope to people trapped in darkness. (Montessori, *Discovering the Child*, 2009, p. 45)

Montessori's ideas on child psychology lead us to improve education in relation to the constant changes in social life and technology "because in schools there are abnormal living conditions that highlight features of protection or fatigue, instead of highlighting the expression of key energy aspirations for life" (Montessori, *Discovering the Child*, 2009, p. 46)

Teaching methods in "orphanages"

Morphological growth

When it comes to children, an important factor must be taken into account: the study of their development. In Montessori-run schools,

anthropometric measurements of body size, child growth such as height, body weight, etc. occupied an important place. In this way, children acquire habits above the rule and, above all, they learn how to respect themselves. Through lessons, mothers are informed about both their personal hygiene and the hygiene of children in general.

Environment

The observation method aimed at children expressing themselves freely and showing the needs and tendencies that remain hidden and repressed when there is no suitable environment to act spontaneously. The observer (teacher) must "know", "see" and "collect" the truth. (Montessori, *Discovering the Child*, 2009, p. 55) by preparing conditions that enable the appearance of different characters.

Discipline and freedom

To the question of how discipline can be achieved in a classroom with freely moving children, Montessori answers with the concept of active discipline. The artificially forced individual to remain silent and immobile is more humiliated than disciplined.

"We call a disciplined individual the one who is a master of himself so that he can decide for himself when he needs to follow a rule of life." (Montessori, *Discovering the Child*, 2009, p. 55) The concept of active discipline is neither easy to understand nor to apply in life, its educational essence is different from the indisputable obligation of immobility.

"The freedom of the child should have as a limit the common interest and as a form what we call the education of behavior and action, preventing the child from offending or harming others. (Montessori, *Discovering the Child*, 2009, p. 56)

The teacher must have not only the ability, but also the interest to observe natural phenomena, to be "patient", more than active, to have curiosity and respect for the phenomenon he observes.

A successful teacher is one who avoids stopping the child's spontaneous movements and forcing gestures that come from the will of others provided they are not useless or harmful. A room where children move usefully, intelligently and voluntarily without committing inhumane behavior, seems quite disciplined to me. During this process any child would highlight

himself.

Independence

Explaining the concept of active discipline, Montessori emphasized the educational method that relies on freedom that aims to help the child gain it by freeing himself from the obstacles that limit his spontaneous expressions.

"That is why the first form of educational intervention should have as its object the guidance of children towards the paths of independence." You can not be free if you are not independent... therefore the manifestations of personal freedom should be guided from early childhood.

The first step towards the dangerous path of independence is independence from the mother's breast. By the age of three the child should be free and independent. Through valuable educational work, young children should be helped to progress on the paths of independence by teaching you the first forms of activity that allow them to rely on themselves. It means you have to teach them to walk, to run, to lift fallen objects on the ground, to dress and undress, to wash and talk, etc. This is the path of education towards independence. A mother who does not try to do these treats her child like a puppet, insulting the human dignity of her child, while nature has entrusted her the task of caring ... Teaching a child how to eat, bathe, and dress is the longest, hardest, and most patient job than those of breastfeeding, washing, and dressing him. The first is the work of the educator that leads to independence, the second is the backward work of the servant, which is also dangerous because it closes the way, puts obstacles in the new life that is developing.

Montessori's ideas on the role of the individual, free education, the development of individual action as well as the role of school in education, along with indisputable rationality, we may emphasize some kind of limitation on the role of social life in education and of the individual-social relationship.

The productivity of education is defined by school as a social institution that in all its areas of teaching must effectively encourage the child to use his forces for social purposes.

If school represents to the child the current life, the lively and real life he leads at home, in the neighborhood or on the playground, as J.Dewey

says, then success, logical continuity in educating the attitude towards the world of our children will be guaranteed.

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