

**INTERNATIONAL
SCIENTIFIC
CONFERENCE ON**

Korçë, October 10, 2023

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



**3rd CONFERENCE
2023**

International Scientific Conference
**“EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND
CARE: CHALLENGES AND
PERSPECTIVES”**

Hosted by:
“Fan S. Noli” University of Korça, Department of Education

in collaboration with:

Department of Education Sciences "Giovanni Maria
Bertin", University of Bologna

Korçë, OCTOBER 10, 2023
PROCEEDING BOOK



ISBN 978-9928-4808-3-5

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Prof. FEDERICA ZANETTI, Department of Educational Sciences "Giovanni Maria Bertin", University of Bologna

Prof. PENELOPE PAPADOPOULOU, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Western Macedonia

CONFERENCE EDITORIAL BOARD

Dhimitri BELLO, Professor, Rector, "Fan S. Noli" University of Korça, Albania

Benita STAVRE, PhD, vice-rector, "Fan S. Noli" University of Korça, Albania

Jonela SPAHO, Associate professor, dean of Faculty of Education and Philology, "Fan S. Noli" University of Korça, Albania

Albina PAJO, PhD, Education Department Chief, "Fan S. Noli" University of Korça, Albania

Irena NIKAJ, Professor, Department of Education, "Fan S. Noli" University of Korça, Albania

Federica ZANETTI, Associate professor, Department of Educational Sciences "Giovanni Maria Bertin", University of Bologna, Italy

Penelope PAPADOPOULOU, Professor, dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Western Macedonia, Greece

Roberto DAINESE, Associate professor, Department of Educational Sciences "Giovanni Maria Bertin", University of Bologna, Italy

Lucia BALDUZZI, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Educational Sciences "Giovanni Maria Bertin", University of Bologna, Italy

Vasiliki PLOGOU, PhD, Ass. professor, Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Western Macedonia, Florina, Greece

Xristina SIDIROPOULOU, Phd, Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Western Macedonia, Florina, Greece

Angelos SOFIANIDIS, Phd, Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Western Macedonia, Florina, Greece

Maria Kirilova BAEVA, Professor, Faculty of Education Studies and the Arts. SU "St. Kliment Ohridski ", Sofia, Bulgaria

Lucia MALINOVA, Professor, Faculty of Education Studies and the Arts. SU "St. Kliment Ohridski ", Sofia, Bulgaria

Mimoza SHAHINI, Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Pristina, Kosovo

Merita SHALA, Professor, vice-rector, University "Isa Boletini"- Mitrovica, Kosovo

Xhevdet ZEKAJ, Professor, Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Elbasan, Albania

Lulzim ADEMI, Professor, Faculty of Pedagogy "St. Kliment Ohridski", University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" Skopje, North Macedonia

Fadbi OSMANI, Professor, dean of Faculty of Pedagogy, University of Tetovo, North Macedonia

Buniamin MEMEDI, Professor, Faculty of Pedagogy, University of Tetovo, North Macedonia

Rabije MURATI, Professor, Faculty of Pedagogy, University of Tetovo, North Macedonia

Mimoza S. ZOGRAFI, Phd, Department of Statistics, University of Economic and Business, Athens, Greece

CONFERENCE COORDINATORS

Arjan KAMBURI - “Fan S. Noli” University- Conference Coordinator

Olger BRAME - “Fan S. Noli” University- Conference Coordinator

Albina PAJO - “Fan S. Noli” University- Conference Coordinator

EDITORS:

Olger BRAME - “Fan S. Noli” University of Korça

Arjan KAMBURI - “Fan S. Noli” University of Korça

Albina PAJO - Fan S. Noli” University of Korça

**“EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE: CHALLENGES
AND PERSPECTIVES” CONFERENCE**

KORÇË, 2024

PROCEEDING BOOK

© 2024 The copyright to the papers in this volume belongs to ECEC. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronically or mechanically, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Table of content

THE IMPORTANCE OF ANALYSIS OF THE SINGULARITY AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING THE PRIVILEGED OBJECT IN THE TREATMENT OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN WITH AUTISM IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION... 10

Albana XHEMALI

Elona HASKO

CHILDREN'S PLAY: DISMANTLING GENDERED TOYS AND STEREOTYPES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION 27

Vassiliki PLIOGOU

Sophia TROMARA

WHAT DO PARENTS LOOK FOR IN ECEC PROGRAMS? UNDERSTANDING PRIORITIES, PROCESSES AND MECHANISMS USED BY CYPRIOT AND DUTCH PARENTS WHEN SELECTING ECEC PROGRAMS 56

Konstantina RENTZOU

THE IMPORTANCE OF ILLUSTRATIONS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NARRATIVE SKILLS IN PRESCHOOLERS..... 78

Rriollza AGOLLI

Laura AGOLLI

PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF QUALITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE CENTER..... 93

Arjan KAMBURI

Ilirjana NASE

VOCABULARY AND EARLY LANGUAGE ACQUISITION LEKSIKU DHE MËSIMI I HERSHËM I GJUHËS..... 108

Elizabeta BANDILOVSKA

Lulzim ADEMI

Jasmina JOVANOVSKA

**ASPECTS OF DIDACTIC MEDIATION MODELS AND THEIR
IMPACT ON THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION FOR
CHILDREN AGED 0-3 YEARS 123**

Evjonda PYLLI

**THE INFLUENCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS ON THE
MOTOR DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN IN THE AGE
GROUP OF 3-6 YEARS. 133**

Viola DOLANI

Mariela BURDA

**EMPOWERING DIVERSITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION: A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO INCLUSIVE
PRACTICES 149**

Ciljeta SIMAKU

Arjan KAMBURI

THE IMPORTANCE OF ANALYSIS OF THE SINGULARITY
AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING THE PRIVILEGED
OBJECT IN THE TREATMENT OF PRE-SCHOOL
CHILDREN WITH AUTISM IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION.

Albana XHEMALI

Psychologist, Primary Public Health Centre,

albanaxhemali24@gmail.com

Elona HASKO

Psychoanalyst, Centre for Advanced Studies,

elona.hasko@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to evidence the importance of identification of the privileged object and children's singularities and using them as tools in the psychological treatment and educational support for children with autism in preschool education institutions based on clinical experiences and the treatment of concrete cases of children in nurseries and kindergartens in Tirana. Various authors such as psychiatrists, psychologists, psychoanalysts and psychoanalytic and also psychoanalytic approach studies have emphasized, especially in recent years, the importance of listening to autistics and analysing the use of their singularity in clinical treatments/psychological

support/educational activities. The clinical experience of the 2 authors in working with children in daycare centres/kindergartens has proved that the use and identification of the privileged object-that is unique to each child and to whom the child could be unseparated-has had an impact on determining the interventions used in the pre-school institutions of Tirana. Using the privileged object has facilitated creating a positive psychologist/teacher-child relationship, improving the child's attention to activities, has encourage the interactions with other children, and reduced anxiety.

4 study cases represented in this article, will illustrate the efficiency of using the privileged object/activity in promoting the child's social, cognitive and speech development in pre-school education.

Keywords: Autism, inclusive education,, psychoanalytic approaches, singularity, privileged object, child's interests, observation, case studies

Abstrakt

Objekti i këtij artikulli, në kuadër të gjithëpërfshirjes, është të nxjerrë në pah rëndësinë e veçantive individuale dhe unike në trajtimin dhe mbështetjen psikologjike dhe edukuese tek fëmijët me autizëm në institucionet e arsimit parashkollor nisur nga përvojat klinike e trajtimin e rasteve konkrete të fëmijëve në çerdhet dhe kopshtet e Tiranës dhe duke u mbështetur në trajtimet sipas teorive dhe praktikave të psikanalizës duke dëshmuar në këtë mënyrë një risi si në trajtimin e autizmit, por edhe duke vënë theksin në respektimin e të drejtave të

fëmijëve në drejtim të të dëgjuarit të asaj që mund të na thonë apo tregojnë. Përvoja klinike e 2 autoreve në cerdhet dhe kopshtet e Tiranës ka provuar se identifikimi dhe përdorimi i objektit të privilegjuar/preferuar ka një ndikim në përcaktimin e ndërhyrjeve për fëmijët autikë në institucionet parashkollore të Tiranës. Përdorimi i objektit të privilegjuar dhe i interesave krijon një marrëdhënie pozitive psikolog/mësuese-fëmijë, përmirëson vëmendjen e fëmijësve autikë në aktivitete, inkurajon marrëdhëniet me fëmijët e tjerë, ul ankthin.

Ilustrimi me 4 rastet klinike të ndjekur e të trajtuar nga autorët e artikullit gjithashtu synon të ofrojë një pasqyrë më të qartë për efikasitetin e përdorimit të veçantive dhe interesave të fëmijëve autikë në përfshirjen e tyre në institucionet parashkollore.

Fjalë kyçe: Autizmi, edukimi gjithëpërfshirës, qasjet psikanalitike, objekti i privilegjuar, interesat e fëmijës, vëzhgimi, raste studimi

Introduction

Inclusive education is a system that includes in mainstream education all students and helps them in the learning process regardless of their social status and abilities. Inclusion and inclusive policies do not aim at the creation of separate schools/classes or groups with two or three children, but the inclusion of all children in large groups and classes, where they have the opportunity to be part of, adapting instructions/curricula/teaching to the needs/particularities they have.

The principles of inclusive education include the integration of all children in kindergartens and schools, taking into account their rights and needs for inclusion in the standard program, the specialization of staff to help and integrate children, etc¹.

Autism is one of the concerns that appears in early childhood and is of high interest to study, because the increase of the number of autistic children (according to a study by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention in the US, in 2020, 1 in every 36 children were diagnosed with autism²) has increased the efforts of scientists and mental health workers to understand it better in order to intervene more effectively. Also, the increased number of children with autism who attend public nurseries and kindergartens of the Municipality of Tirana (about 1 child in every 100 children registered in 2020³) calls for the planning and implementation of earlier interventions for the adaptation of these children in preschool institutions.

This is a qualitative study that includes 4 case studies of autistic children in the nurseries and kindergartens of Tirana that were followed and supported using interventions based on the psychoanalytical approaches specifically according to the *subject as unique/singular, the privileged object* and *specific interests/abilities*.

Leo Kanner was the first, who in 1943 presented the concept of "early

¹ ASCAP, 2020, Nevoja Për Zhvillim Profesional Të Mësuesve Ndhmës Në Arsimin Parauniversitar <https://www.Ascap.Edu.Al/wp-content/Uploads/2020/10/Raporti-per-mesuesit-ndihmes-compressed.Pdf>.

² Center for Disease Control and Prevention "Autism prevalence slightly higher in CDC' ADDM Network".

³ Open data, Tirana Municipality

childhood autism⁴". A few months later, independently and unaware to Kanner's study, Asperger, in 1944 he published his thesis "Psychopathology of autism in childhood⁵". Kanner describes some features of autism such as: being alone (*aloneness*) with typical manifestations such as the lack of eye contact, the tendency to play alone, the lack of social and emotional reciprocity; *sameness* (maintenance of rigid routines) with typical manifestations such as low flexibility, rigid routines, lack of symbolic play; communication difficulties with manifestations such as lack of speech, vocal stereotypies, inability to initiate and maintain a conversation.

It was in DSM-V, that the term autism spectrum disorder (ASD) began to be used instead of pervasive developmental disorders (APA, 2013). Also, DSM-V defines three levels of autism based on the severity of its symptoms. The first level includes the mildest symptoms of dysregulation, previously individuals with these symptoms may have been diagnosed according to the DSM-IV with Asperger's syndrome. Individuals at this level of autism have difficulty initiating social interaction, transitioning from one activity to another, and unchanging behaviour. The second level of CSA includes individuals with a deficit in verbal and non-verbal communication, limited social interaction, difficulty adapting to changes and repetitive behaviours. The most severe cases of autism are included in the third level: individuals have great difficulty in verbal and non-verbal communication skills, difficulty in adapting to change, repetitive behaviours, difficulty

⁴ Leo Kanner, Autistic disturbances of affective contact, 1943, F.217-250

⁵ Hans Asperger, Autistic psychopathy in childhood", Edited by Uta Frith, 2009

relating to others, and experience great distress when a target is changed. (APA, 2013). For a subject, to meet the diagnostic criteria for ACS, symptoms must be present in the first two years of life (APA, 2013). The first symptoms we notice in the first year of life are: delayed language, lack of interest in social interaction, and an unusual communication style (APA, 2013). During the second year of life inappropriate and repetitive behaviours become more apparent and typical play behaviours are absent (APA, 2013).

The inclusion of autistic children in the pre-school system, which assumes essential importance for interventions in early childhood, presents great challenges due to the fact that each of these children are so unique in exhibiting different symptoms and behaviours from each other. In the first place, especially for mental health workers, practicing the profession, in addition to the ethics of knowledge, the issue of the ethics for the subject is also raised, and as Bernard Golse underlines "*...every scientific progress must necessarily be accompanied by a specific ethical reflection*"⁶. For this reason, the specifics of the symptoms of autism in each child, make it even more important to be ethic in working with autistic children, and as Jacques Alain Miller points out, "*...the placement of the subject and his singularity in the first place*"⁷ especially respecting his rights according to the individuality and interests of the child as the most important part. Famous spokespersons of the autistic community in France such as

⁶ Bernard Golse, De quelques questions éthiques en matière d'autisme infantile, Le Coq Heron, 2017, F.63.

⁷ Jean Claude Maleval, "La difference autistique"Universite Paris 8, 2021, f.22

Josef Schovanec underline "*the great importance of supporting the identification of children's interests to develop their skills*"⁸.

Different authors like psychiatrist, psychologist with a psychoanalytic orientation and lacanian psychoanalysts have underlined the importance of listening to the autists and the usefulness of analysing and using the singularities of autists in working with them⁹, ¹⁰. Jim Sinclair, an activist for the autistic persons rights in his book (Don't mourn for us) "*The ways we relate are different. Push for the things your expectations tell you are normal, and you'll find frustration, disappointment, resentment, maybe even rage and hatred. Approach respectfully, without preconceptions, and with openness to learning new things, and you'll find a world you could never have imagined.*"¹¹".

Another cultivated mute autistic like Annick Deshays affirms that "*the first concern should be to find the faculty (or faculties) of each autistic person, before establishing any educational steps.*"¹²"She considers that "*employing behaviourism prompts practitioners to make us 'simple' through a formatting that reduces our freedom of expression, and this intensifies our grave problem of identification and humanization.*"

Like the greater number of autists, she asks to be considered as a subject capable of a creativity that needs to be taken into account:

⁸ Po aty.

⁹ Maleval, Jean-Claude. Listen to the autists. Hurly-burly, The International Lacanian Journal Of Psychoanalysis, May 2012, Pg (180-185).

¹⁰ Raffy Alex, Point de vue des auteurs Asperber et des psychanalistes sur l'autisme. Le Coq Heron, 2017, F.31-44.

¹¹ Maleval, Jean-Claude. Listen to the autists. Hurly-burly, The International Lacanian Journal Of Psychoanalysis, May 2012, Pg (180-185).

¹² Po aty.

“drawing on modes of knowledge in accordance with our goodwill mobilises a potential that is specific to us. [...] The more I take part in the decisions that concern me, the more I have the impression of existing fully”. Also, another high functioning autistic like Daniel Tammet, when questioned on how an autistic child could interact with another one he responds that *“..it need to invent a method for each of them”*.¹³

During the work of the authors of this article as a psychologist and as a supervisor in the daycares and kindergartens, they experimented and examine the identification and the use of the privileged object and children’s interests to create specific intervention based on the children’s singularity. We use the privileged object and the singularity to create a positive psychologist /teacher-child relationship, to draw the child's attention to activities, to encourage interaction with other children, to ensure eye contact, etc. We intervene and play with this child's favourite object or activity by adding new elements to promote the child's cognitive and speech development. *The parents of Derek Paravicini, in particular his “Nanny”, did from his earliest childhood what most “specialists” advise against, encouraging his musical “obsessions” and his attachment to an autistic object, an electronic organ. “As his musical abilities surged forward, the gap between these and his intellectual and social development was becoming more and more marked.” However, all that he acquired went via his islet of ability, finally allowing him, in adulthood, not only to perform concerts,*

13 Maleval, Jean Claude, “La difference autistique”Universite Paris 8, 2021, f.21

alone or with an orchestra, but to develop “enough of a sense of himself to assert his will, appropriately, in conversation with a stranger.”¹⁴

We do not intend to change the child to suit to the environment or the requirements of the institution. In the case of autism, the best way to include a child is to adapt the environment and specifically the teaching methods to the child interests/singularity and understanding his world. We create a caring and affective relationship with the child, keeping in mind that the child should not see us as an object or as a subject that he could use for his own interests. After building this psychologist/teacher/assistant teacher-child relationship, intervention and interaction with the child will be easier and more spontaneous, without being intrusive. So, we invent tools, strategies to hear, displace and generalise this privileged focus of interest and progressively lead the child towards a learning process.

We found the above statements while working with autistic children in kindergartens and creches, and searching for the most efficient paths and methods to involve autistic children in relationships with other children and educational staff, to engage them in educational activities or plays. The purpose of this article is also to describe some concrete case studies for illustrating better the suggested interventions.

Study cases

¹⁴ Maleval, Jean-Claude. Listen to the autists. Hurly-burly, The International Lacanian Journal Of Psychoanalysis, May 2012, Pg (180-185).

Case I

Boy, age 4 years and 4 months. He regularly attends kindergarten from the age of 3. He knows and identifies his bag, water bottle, etc. well. Has good practical and self-care skills. Follows instructions and has a good level of language comprehension. R is able to identify animals, colors and figures in a book if we ask him, but he doesn't name them. R. recognizes and correctly identifies the emotions in the picture. When the children approach him he does not reject them, but he also has no interest in them; even during play R observes the children as they play, but does not get involved in their play. He is able to follow simple instructions. While working with R, he began to act out some moving songs such as "the wheel on the bus, go round and round", "Finger Family" and "If you are happy", showing an interest in music. The child had attended 1 year of ABA therapy.

The focus of intervention with R was on following his favorite interests and activities, and then introducing new elements and objects to each activity, including other children to play and interact with. The approach was gradual and very progressive, allowing him the time and space needed to accept adults in the kindergarten, including teachers, psychologists, and support staff, and then to fulfill the demands directed at him, always respecting the needs of the child. We identified and used child ability to draw and his interest to communicate and discover more about R. After he began to interact with the psychologist and the assistant teacher, other children were also asked

to involve more in R activities. So they were the ones who took him, put him in the chair, took him out to the yard, etc., he accepted their help, but did not allow to share his toys or objects with them. His interests were drawing, coloring with water colors, as soon as he entered the group he asked for paper and pencil, directing the adults on the shelf to give them to him. He liked cube games and puzzles. Initially this interest of his with drawings was used to teach him more elements..The intervention happened gradually, R showed a skill, something he knew, and the teacher-psychologist-assistant teacher staff added other elements to them thus creating a more complex picture. R's interest in songs was used to integrate him into games with other children in the group such as playing with handkerchiefs or playing with chairs.

Case II

Girl age 4 years.S was breastfed until she was 3 months old. She started walking at the age of 1 year and two months. From her mother's reports when she was little she was able to make eye contact, she react to music and noises by turning her head. S was vety attached ro the phone tv, shw liked to watch cartoons on the phone, which were generally in English. At the first meetings, her mother emphasized that S knew how to count numbers in English and name colors in this language, although this was never noticed in the crèche. She used to spend a lot of time on her cell phone, but now they let her spend less time. S exhibited a typical tiptoe walk and frequent self-rotations. At home, she

plays with cubes, toys with lights and music and watches the cartoon "Masha". She really likes Masha and tries to imitate the movements of the characters. S often uttered exclamations such as ssss, th.thth and sisisi etc. In general, she appeared calm, when she wanted something she cried, but holding her in her arms and caressing were enough to calm her. During the activity S observed what was happening around, laughed but did not participate or is able to initiate a collaboration with peers, sometimes shw approached the children (especially in activities with rhythmic movements) she looked the play or activities that peers are involved and laughed. There are times when she wants to join the activity, but then withdraws, in these situations the teacher includes her in the activity.

The first day in the yard she was passive, standing next to the psychologist. When the psychologist plucked some leaves and threw them on her hands and S repeated the action and dealt with this for a long time. When the other children came out into the yard she laughed and started running. Then she sat near a tree, collected and threw the soil, when the psychologist did the same action, she saw it but did not react, when the psychologist extended both hands, the child threw the soil into the hands of the psychologist.

After noting S's favorite activities and movies, it was decided that work with her could focus on moving songs, music games and picture books, also using her favorite characters like Masha to play and interact with.

Case III

A, boy, age 5 years. Initially, it was noticed that when the members of the kindergarten and support staff called him or asked him for something, he run away but at the same time he would look at them out of the corner with his eye. He liked books and leafed through them, he could say a few words while leafing through book pages, but the moment someone approached him or drew his attention he would stop talking. When he wanted something, he took the adults' hand and directed them to the object he wanted. Repeated the sound "aa aa" over and over while running in the group and when the psychologist repeated the sound like that, aaa he stopped and tend to cover her mouth with his hand. This happened even when a song was sung to him, or when they said other words with the letter. He knew the function of objects, e.g. he know thw function of tennis rackets and he tried to shoot the ball with them. He understood when something was explained to him, e.g. if they took him out to the yard and then it was explained to him that "we have to go inside because it is very hot", "we have to drink water", etc., he obeyed without much resistance. Also, during the activity in the yard, A preferred playing with the seesaw and sand.

After the analysis and observation of the activities as above, we worked on using these preferred activities, which allowed contact and relationships with him.

Case IV

M, 2 years and 4 months, girl. While working in the kindergarten of Tirana municipality, the psycho-social staff also received information about the family history of children with autism. From the discussion with M's mother, she tells us that M was born in the seventh month of pregnancy and underweight. Also, in terms of physical development, M seems smaller than his peers and also has fear to go down the stairs or obstacles. According to the parent, M spent a lot of time in front of the TV and spends most of his time with his grandmother.

In the firsts days, she came to the kindergarten with her grandmother and sometimes with her mother. She cried when separated from her grandmother. She was attached with one of the teachers and preferred to stay with her the most of the time. M followed the teacher wherever she went. She liked to stay in the yard and it was the only place where she calmed down. She has no interest to play or explore the surrounding environment. In the yard she stayed behind the teacher and cried when she left. What impressed M was that at the beginning of attending the crèche she was afraid to overcome obstacles or stairs. She stood on the stairs and cried but was afraid to cross it. M reacted when the psychologist first called her name and looked into her eyes for a few seconds, but then avoided looking, she also reacted to the music. Most of the time she didn't respond when you called her or when you gave any instructions. M has no interest in other children and adults. She also looks at the paintings on the walls, constantly making sounds like: "Wow, hahaha, etc. She answered and turned her head only when her grandmother and one of the teachers called her.

She had an unusual movement of hands and fingers and often made sounds. I noticed that at one point she was reciting the song "Jony jony" out loud. The psychologist started singing the song and noticed that M looked into her eyes, turned to her and laughed. The sounds and songs in the English awakened her interest in the language. Music was used as a way to teach the girl words and engage her in activities. Also, it was noticed during the observation that the girl likes wall paintings and picture books. At first she only looked at the cover of the book, but after a few months, she flipped through the pages of the book and pointed to the objects in it (Sometimes she gave the book to the psychologist and asked her to tell him what was in it). M now can make eye contact all the time, she respond when you call here name.

Child-focused interventions was focused in play therapy and following the child's interests: using music and pictures to learn, using the hug technique and rhythmic group games.

Conclusions

The identification in autistic children of singularities such as skills, interests, favorite plays through observation and analysis and the use of the privileged/preferred specific object to create specific teaching methods, interventions can serve as a useful tools to organize, invent and develop interventions or work with autistic children and include them in the education activities and in this way respecting the them as a subject, according to the ethics of the psychoanalytic approach,.

The identification of singularities and the use of the privileged object

as a communication tool between autistic children and others (psychologist/teacher/educator/assistant teacher), while working with autistic children in the nurseries and kindergartens of Tirana, has proved to be quite efficient for establishing attachment and maintaining relationships and creating teaching methods, education plans and increasing knowledge and skills of teachers/assistant teachers.

References

- ASCAP, 2020, Nevoja Për Zhvillim Profesional Të Mësuesve Ndhmës Në Arsimin Parauniversitar <https://www.Ascap.Edu.AL/wp-content/Uploads/2020/10/Raporti-per-mesuesit-ndihmes-compressed.Pdf>
- Asperger H, “Autistic psychopathy in childhood”, 2009, Edited by Uta Frith. Cambridge University Press
- Golse Bernard, De quelques questions éthiques en matière d’autisme infantile, Le Coq Heron, 2017/2, Nr.229, f.63-73.
<https://dictionary.apa.org/autism-spectrum-disorder>
- Leo Kanner, Autistic disturbances of affective contact, 1943, F.217-250,
<https://simonsfoundation.s3.amazonaws.com/share/071207-leo-kanner-autistic-affective-contact.pdf>
- Maleval, Jean Claude, “La difference autistique”, Universite Paris 8 Saint Denis, 2021
- Maleval, Jean-Claude. Listen to the autists. Hurly-burly, The International Lacanian Journal Of Psychoanalysis, May 2012,

Pg (180-185).

Raffy Alex, Point de vue des auteurs Asperger et des psychanalistes sur l'autisme. Le Coq Heron, 2017, F.31-44.

CHILDREN'S PLAY: DISMANTLING GENDERED TOYS
AND STEREOTYPES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION

Vassiliki PLIOGOU

Dr. in Educational Studies

Assistant Professor

Department of Early Childhood Education, School of Humanities and
Social Sciences

University of Western Macedonia, Florina/Greece

vplogou@uowm.gr

Sophia TROMARA

Dr. in Educational Studies

Department of Early Childhood Education, School of Humanities and
Social Sciences

University of Western Macedonia, Florina/Greece

s.tromara@gmail.com

Abstract

Early childhood is a crucial age for young children, as it is a period of accelerated physical growth and accumulative cognitive, social and psychoemotional development, where children absorb socially

constructed gendered values, beliefs, stereotypes, norms, and attitudes. Gender transformative approaches should start early in Early Childhood Education, as it provides, through various interventions, an immense opportunity to educators to promote the rights of girls and boys toward an equitable and inclusive education. Quality education is committed not only to the transmission of knowledge and skills concerning gender equality, but also aims to the empowerment of girls and boys, to the deconstruction of social norms, discriminatory practices, beliefs, and stereotypes, which perpetuate inequitable gendered power relations. Play has a decisive role in children's development and socialisation, while it consciously or unconsciously reinforces gender stereotypes, mobilised mainly by the Media that can provoke harmful attitudes and affect future academic/occupational choices. The specific paper proposes ideas for intervention activities at students 4-8 years old and focuses on how children perceive and respond to the gendered binary division of toys. The suggested set of multimodal activities aims to explore children's views on gender stereotypes, raise awareness against bias and challenge the segregation of girls and boys around play. Through collaborative and interactive learning, discussion, videos, web resources, photos, books, drawings, cardboards, coloured pens, and other common materials can enable the implementation of various interventions. In conclusion, students will raise awareness, reconstruct their knowledge, employ gender equitable attitudes and be part of a transformative learning environment.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education; gender equality; gender

transformative education; gendered toys; play

Abstrakt

Fëmijëria e hershme është një moshë vendimtare për fëmijët e vegjël, pasi është një periudhë e rritjes së përsheptuar fizike dhe zhvillimit akumulues kognitiv, social dhe psikoemocional, ku fëmijët thithin vlerat, besimet, stereotipet, normat dhe qëndrimet gjinore të ndërtuara nga shoqëria. Qasjet transformuese gjinore duhet të fillojnë herët në Arsimin e Fëmijërisë së Hershme, pasi ai ofron, nëpërmjet ndërhyrjeve të ndryshme, një mundësi të jashtëzakonshme për edukatorët për të promovuar të drejtat e vajzave dhe djemve drejt një arsimi të barabartë dhe gjithëpërfshirës. Arsimi cilësor është i përkushtuar jo vetëm për transmetimin e njohurive dhe aftësive në lidhje me barazinë gjinore, por synon gjithashtu fuqizimin e vajzave dhe djemve, për dekonstrukcionin e normave shoqërore, praktikave diskriminuese, besimeve dhe stereotipeve që përjetësojnë marrëdhënie të pabarabarta të pushtetit gjinor. Loja ka një rol vendimtar në zhvillimin dhe socializimin e fëmijëve, ndërkohë që me vetëdije ose pa vetëdije përforcon stereotipet gjinore, të mobilizuara kryesisht nga media, që mund të provokojnë qëndrime të dëmshme dhe të ndikojnë në zgjedhjet e ardhshme akademike/profesionale. Punimi specifik propozon ide për ndërhyrje të nxënësit 4-8 vjeç dhe fokusohet në mënyrën se si fëmijët perceptojnë dhe reagojnë ndaj ndarjes binare gjinore të lodrave. Grupi i sugjeruar i aktiviteteve multimodale synon të eksplorojë pikëpamjet e fëmijëve mbi stereotipet gjinore, të rrisë ndërgjegjësimin kundër

paragjykimëve dhe të sfidojë ndarjen e vajzave dhe djemve rreth lojës. Nëpërmjet të mësuarit bashkëpunues dhe ndërveprues, diskutimi, videot, burimet në internet, fotot, librat, vizatimet, kartonat, stilolapsat me ngjyra dhe materiale të tjera të zakonshme mund të mundësojnë zbatimin e ndërhyrjeve të ndryshme. Si përfundim, studentët do të rrisin ndërgjegjësimin, do të rindërtojnë njohuritë e tyre, do të përdorin qëndrime të barabarta gjinore dhe do të jenë pjesë e një mjedisi mësimor transformues.

Fjalët kyçe: Edukimi në fëmijërinë e hershme, barazia gjinore, edukimi transformues gjinor; lodrat gjinore; loja

Introduction

Although we all understand the notion of play, there is not a single definition to describe and delineate concisely what we mean when using the term (Zosh et al., 2018; Lindon, 2001; Scarlett et al., 2005; Brown & Patte, 2013), although it binds humanity, regardless of time, space, socioeconomic status, gender, culture (UNICEF, 2018). Some scholars have supported that one way to better conceptualise “play” is by applying criteria that help us conceptualise what play is not (Brown & Patte, 2013). Others have come to the conclusion that we should perceive play through children’s perceptions of play (Scarlett et al., 2005), which means that play has to do with being outdoors, having fun, not working, sharing moment with friends, making free choices, acting/pretending fantasy roles, dramatization, playing games (Scarlett

et al., 2005). Children's play is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon without specific and strict borderlines that encompasses a broad range and array of activities, actions and experiences, undertaken for their own purposes, which mainly produce satisfaction and joy/enjoyment (Lindon, 2001).

Play has a long history of its own development, while there has been an attempt for categorising it in types, as it can take many forms (UNICEF, 2018). More analytically, five types of play can be discerned: physical play, play with objects, symbolic play, pretence/socio-dramatic play, and games with rules (Whitebread et al., 2012). Additionally, the main focus of research and theories of play (psychoanalytic, cognitive developmental, cultural-ecological, evolutionary and comparative) (Scarlett et al., 2005) has predominantly been oriented toward its functions and especially on its importance and benefits (Whitebread et al., 2012). Play has a decisive role in children's motor, cognitive and social development, while adding the development of communication, language/literacy skills (Prioletta & Pyle, 2017), perception, logical processes, attention, imagination, creativity, memory, problem-solving skills, negotiation skills, critical skills, social skills, emotional skills, stress management, self-regulation and many more (UNICEF, 2018; Power, 2000).

This set of experiences that spring out of play are often defined as "playful experiences", and although there is not a consensus about their concise definition, there is one about their common feature, which is agency (UNICEF, 2018; Zosh et al., 2018; Zosh et al., 2017). This specific aspect of play has to do with children's control over play, about

their ability of taking initiatives, expressing autonomy, self-choice, decision-making, flexibility, and the capability to control their playful experiences (Bautista et al., 2019; Zosh et al., 2018; UNICEF, 2018). Another crucial aspect and intrinsic value of play, in its entire spectrum, either through toys, games, activities, is that it forms a holistic and natural way of learning (Weisgram 2019, Weisgram & Bruun, 2018; Zosh et al., 2018), especially in the early years (from birth to eight years), which are the most crucial period of accelerated physical growth and accumulative cognitive, social and psychoemotional development, which overall function as the cornerstone of future well-being and success that will span to adulthood (UNICEF, 2018). “Playful learning”, an umbrella-term (VVOB, 2018; Zosh et al., 2017; Hassinger-Das et al., 2017), comprised of various activities, occurs in a continuum, unfolded within the following spectrum: free play (Bautista et al., 2019), guided play, games, co-opted play, playful instruction, directed instruction. The criteria are the involvement (support/guidance) of adults (teachers/parents) and the learning outcomes (Morales-Murillo et al., 2020; Zosh et al., 2018; Zosh et al., 2017; Hassinger-Das et al., 2017). According to research, playful learning (or learning through play) has the following five characteristics, which overall help us to grasp the content of the term (Zosh et al., 2018; UNICEF, 2018): 1. It is meaningful, which means that children play to better understand the world around them and expand what they already know. In this case, play is a lens that helps them connect those new experiences with their prior knowledge. 2. It is joyful, which means that children when

playing are experiencing joy, thrill, excitement, pleasure, laughter, and motivation. Although, playing might entail some kind of frustration, difficulties or even oppositions/rivals it generates positive emotions, which facilitate learning. On the contrary, research proves that negative feelings and experiences function as an obstacle against learning. 3. It involves active engagement, which means that when children are playing, there is self-direction, at some level. 4. It is iterative and not static. Children are revising what they believe they know, they are experimenting with new possibilities, processes which lead to deeper learning. 5. It is socially interactive, highlighting thus the immense gains from social interaction with peers by communicating, exchanging ideas, which can overall expand their critical thinking and build healthy relationships. Finally, we should stress that the right to play and engage in recreational activities is an established child's right through the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, something that expands its added value (Article 31, 1959; see, also, Prisk, 2022).

Literature Review

Gender stereotypes, children's play and the gendered toy industry

However, playing is not only about positive learning outcomes, innocence, and joy. It relates alongside to negative notions and effects, as toys, games and/or activities consciously or unconsciously can reinforce gender stereotypes, which intersect with other categories, such as race, ethnicity, disability (ECDAN, 2023; Heikkilä, 2022;

Eisen et al, 2021; Josephidou, 2020; Plan International, 2017; Wingrave, 2016). Gender stereotypes function both prescriptively and descriptively; that is as gender norms that impose in a constraining manner dual standards for female and male behaviour, attitudes, activities, interests, occupations and also as a set of expectations about the characteristics males in contrast to females will acquire (Fine & Rush, 2018; Weisgram, 2016).

The interconnectedness of children's play with gender is a well-established topic in research and theory. On the one hand, gender-schema theory (Martin & Halverson, 1981; Weisgram Cherney & Dempsey, 2010) supports that toy selection based upon gender begins by the first 18-20 months. The formation of gendered related activities, norms and roles (present and future) starts from two to three years, while children have already acquired a gender identity and can label girls and boys in pictures with accuracy. By the age of three, their knowledge based upon gender stereotypes influences toy selection and their perception of gender roles (UNESCO, 2022; Chi, 2018; Weisgram et al, 2014; Cherney & Dempsey, 2010), while at the age of four to five children start to socialize with peers according to gender, excluding children from the opposite sex, an apparent segregation in classrooms, as well, where children not only play separately, but also engage at different corners playing with materials "appropriate" to their gender (King et al., 2020; Prioletta & Pyle, 2017). Those gender-related preferences and behaviours are more rigid between five and seven years, become more flexible during middle childhood and turn more intensified during adolescence (Cherney & Dempsey, 2010). In line

with the above, once children accept their gender identity, their membership in a specific gender, which is formed through a binary division, they adopt and conform to the social roles, which accompany the specific identity, something that expands to the entire array of their preferences for socialization and toy/play selection (Prioletta & Pyle, 2017; Owen & Padron, 2016; Cherney & Dempsey, 2010).

On the other hand, developmental-constructivist theories, focus on how gender stereotypes, bias and prejudice are constructed by and through their interaction with their environment (Weisgram, 2016). According to this approach, we can discern two distinct approaches, the one focuses on the stimuli produced by the social settings (the context) within children operate and absorb their experiences, while the other focuses in the constructive processes, which have to do with the child's developing cognitive skills (Weisgram, 2016; Cherney & Dempsey, 2010). Most importantly, the constructivist approach supports that gender stereotypes are socially/culturally constructed according to societal norms (Weisgram, 2018), mainly by socializing agents (Weisgram et al., 2014), such as the family (parents) (Eisen et al., 2021), the community, the school, the toy industry (corporations and stores) and the Media through advertisements (Prioletta & Pyle, 2017; Weisgram et al., 2014). Parental beliefs constructed upon gender stereotypes play a decisive role in children's choices about gender normative roles and toy selection, something that reinforces gender disparities (Eisen et al., 2021), which means that when children come to Early Childhood Education (or pre-school educational settings), they have already endorsed rigid perceptions about gender activities, roles,

appearance, occupations, and toys (Weisgram, 2016).

According to research, large marketing corporations and the toy industry are predominantly constructed upon gender stereotypes, and, thus, are not only partly responsible for producing them, but also reinforcing them through certain marketing strategies, such as labelling, modelling, packaging, visual colouring (pink/blue), physical segregation, and advertisements (Weisgram, 2016; Weisgram et al., 2014). Such marketing practices are following the principle of the rigid binary gender division (boys/girls) (Fine & Rush, 2016) and expand to the entire array of products that can be consumed by children, such as illustrated books, clothing, accessories, drawing sets (pens, pencils), culinary sets, hygiene care products, films, movies, etc (Owen & Padron, 2016). Although the origin and development of gender-related toy preference is a controversial issue (Davis & Hines, 2020), the gendered toy industry is not; on the contrary, the fact that is overtly gendered more than ever has attracted both academic and public scrutiny (Fulcher & Hayes, 2018; Fine & Rush, 2016; Weisgram et al., 2014) because of the following reasons. First, toys are not just commercial products meant for satisfying children's needs for playing. They are material artifacts, which convey, implicitly or explicitly, powerful messages, both cultural and social, and, thus, function as a form of social capital (Mertala et al., 2016). Those messages are constructed upon gender norms and stereotypes, which have a negative impact on children's development, socialization and how children perceive human relationships and the world at large (Weisgram & Bruun, 2018; Weisgram & Dinella, 2016; Owen & Padron, 2016).

Various types of toys portray clear associations with gendered stereotypical attributes and striking differences among gender lines. For example, research has shown that girls' toys, such as dolls, doll houses, fashion items for dolls, make-up sets, tea-sets, furniture sets, cooking devices, writing sets, relate to appearance, domesticity, concern for others, nurturance, or educational activities (King et al., 2020; Weisgram & Bruun, 2018; Owen & Padron, 2016). During advertisements, which also have audiovisual attributes (i.e., pink, red, pastel colours and girly music) associated with femininity, girls are interacting with their toys and other girls in a different way than boys, usually in indoor settings, while exhibiting more intensively passivity, emotional expressivity, fantasy, and triviality (Owen & Padron, 2016). Boys' toys, such as superheroes, construction vehicles, racing cars, swords, weapons, baseball gear, sports balls, involve action, construction of objects, movement, agency, competitiveness, violence, and orientation toward science. During advertisements, which have accordingly audiovisual attributes associated with masculinity (blue, dark, vibrant colours and active boys' music) their peer interaction usually takes place outdoors, through more intense verbal communication and physical action, while exhibiting peer collaboration and real-world/realistic skills, physical strength, power, aggressiveness and even destruction (King et al., 2020; Weisgram & Bruun, 2018; Owen & Padron, 2016).

Second, gender stereotypes and norms are normalized and have various detrimental effects on various aspects of a child's development (spatial, cognitive, physical, social) (Eisen et al., 2021; King et al., 2020;

Fulcher & Hayes, 2018; Weisgram & Bruun, 2018; Weisgram & Dinella, 2016), behaviour (Weisgram, 2016), self-perception (UNGEI, 2023), educational progress, future academic and/or occupational aspirations and choices with long-lasting socio-economic effects which span across adolescence and adulthood (UNGEI, 2023; Weisgram & Bruun, 2018). Although gender norms and stereotypes may affect all children, there is a disproportionate share for girls and children who do not conform to them (UNGEI, 2023). Harmful gender stereotypes and norms create rigid, exclusive, and oppressive boundaries and provoke unhealthy and hazardous attitudes that can ignite gender-based violence, which in some cases is school-related (UNGEI, 2019). Above all they are the root-cause for the inequitable distribution of power and resources among women and men and gender inequality (UNGEI, 2023), which is a form of social injustice (Iceland et al., 2023), a violation of human (and children's) rights (UNGEI, 2019) and against the function of a democratic and prosperous society.

Education has a critical role to fulfil, as it can dismantle gender stereotypes and norms, inequitable power relations, social injustice, and other forms of oppressive and violent systems of behaviour (UNGEI, 2019). Girls and boys must be empowered within safe learning environments (UNGEI, 2019) and equipped with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to raise awareness (Pliogou, 2021), dismantle gender inequality and struggle against all forms of discrimination based on gender, which overall function as a barrier against a sustainable common future. In line with this, all children, regardless of their gender, must be treated in equitable ways as human

beings and citizens, enjoying freedom of choices, opportunities, capabilities, in all sectors of life (social, political, economic, and cultural), equally power and access to knowledge (UNICEF, 2018). Gender responsive (UNESCO, 2021; VVOB, 2018) along with gender transformative approaches (ECDAN, 2023; Plan International, 2021), which draw from the insights of Feminist Pedagogy (Shrewsbury, 1997) should start early, as in Early Childhood Education, as it provides, through various interventions, which involve children's toys, play and storytelling, an immense opportunity for educators to construct joyful, meaningful, gender equitable and respectful perceptions and attitudes.

Theory into Practice: Suggested Intervention Activities

The suggested set of intervention activities addresses to children four to eight years old, and involve common materials (such as, cardboard sheets in various colours, but not blue or pink, white cardboard cards (11x6), white paper sheets and smaller cardboard papers in various colours, pencils, coloured markers, glue, scissors).

Upon their completion, children should be able to:

- Identify and describe their emotions raised through playing with favourite toys.
- Explain/elaborate what leads their choices when selecting toys.
- Raise awareness about the gender division of toys/deconstruct gendered messages about toys.
- Develop the idea of gender-neutral toys.

- Understand that they can feel free to play with whatever toy/s makes them happy without constraints.
- Develop the idea of acting outside gender roles.
- Interact with other peers and with teacher along with their toys without gender stereotypes.
- Enhance agency and autonomy.
- Collaborate with others while delivering assignments.
- Communicate the idea that girls and boys have equal rights.
- Cultivate different types of skills.
- Communicate their project to other classes.

Preparation

The teacher must print the suggested coloured photos and glue them on cardboard sheets.

Suggested Activities

- Students are gathered in a circle and describe with what toys they play and name their favourite toy and describe it.
- Students are asked to describe their emotions while playing with the specific toy.
- Students are asked to describe with what toys they were playing at a younger age.
- Students are asked to name their best friend/s and describe their emotions towards them while playing.

- Students are asked to write the name and draw with colours their favourite toy on a white card (dimensions 11x6 cm).
- Students are asked to gather all cards and divide them according to categories, such as size, material, activity or theme (electronic, magical, food, bath, building, soft, puzzles, board games, action figures, sports balls, stories/books, animals etc.).
- Students are asked to name and describe (colours, departments, advertisements) their favourite toy store/s and build an argument on their preference. Students will have to describe their emotions while visiting the specific store.
- Students are shown photos from department stores or products (gendered toys), such as the following, and then are asked to describe the photos and express whether they are familiar with the labelling of toys in “girls” and “boys” toys. The discussion can raise topics, such as:
- Do they agree with the labelling or not? Would they buy toys from a store that has girls/boys department? Would the colour of the product make them not to buy the product and why? With whom can they play these toys?

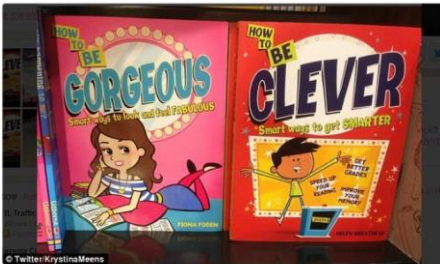
:
CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES



1

<https://www.theodysseyonline.com/gendered-childrens-toys>

2



3

© Twitter: KrystinaMeens

4



CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES



5

The pink and blue divide indirectly separates cars and Barbie dolls by gender. *Katy Burdette*

6



- Classroom Discussion: To which department would they locate the following toys? Who can play with the following toys? Girls, boys, or both? Would they buy these toys if they were in girls'/boys' separate departments and if themselves had the opposite sex from the department?



7



9



15



16



17

18



- “Our Own Toy Store”: Students are asked to glue their cards with their favourite toy on big white cardboards to create their

own toy store. Toys will be displayed by categories, as previously, and the toy store will have to be named by voting. Cardboards can also be drawn additionally with cut-out shapes of balloons, clouds, stars, trees, animals, geometric patterns, and other motives. The “toy store” will decorate the classroom for the entire school year.

- Students can create an advertisement for their store, emphasizing that the store has toys available to all children regardless of gender. The advertisement can either involve dramatization and be recorded as a video and can also have a song or a slogan/moto. It can be realized in collaboration with other modules/courses available within the school curriculum.

Conclusion

The suggested set of intervention activities reflects the concepts and objectives of gender-responsive pedagogy and Feminist Pedagogy. They aim to explore children’s views on gender stereotypes, raise awareness against bias, challenge the segregation of girls and boys around play and toys that is largely intentionally mobilized by the marketing and the Media, promote collaborative learning, and create a transformative learning environment through the use of common materials.

References

- Bautista, A. A., Habib, M., Eng, A., & Bull, R. (2019). Purposeful play during learning centre time: From curriculum to practice. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 51*, 715–736.
- Beadle, S., & Bordoloi, S. (2019). *Ending school-related gender-based violence. A series of thematic briefs. Brief 1: Applying a whole school approach to prevent school-related gender-based violence*. United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI). <https://www.ungei.org/publication/brief-1-applying-whole-school-approach-prevent-school-related-gender-based-violence>.
- Brown, F., & Patte, M. (2013). *Rethinking children's play*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Cherney, I. D., & Dempsey, J. (2010) Young children's classification, stereotyping and play behaviour for gender neutral and ambiguous toys. *Educational Psychology, 30*(6), 651-669. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01443410.2010.498416>.
- Chi, J. (2018). *Pathways for gender equality through early childhood teacher policy in China. Echidna global scholars program. discussion paper/ November 2018*. Center for Universal Education at Brookings.
- Davis, J. T. M., & Hines, M. (2020). How large are gender differences in toy preferences? a systematic review and meta-analysis of toy preference research. *Archives of Sexual Behaviour, 49*(2), 373-394. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-019-01624-7>.

- Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN). (2023). *Gender equality in early childhood*. <https://ecdan.org/themes-gender-equality-in-early-childhood/>.
- Eisen, S., Matthews, S. E., Jirout, J. (2021). Parents' and children's gendered beliefs about toys and screen media. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 74, 101276. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2021.101276>.
- Fine, C., & Rush, E. (2018). Why does all the girls have to buy pink stuff?" the ethics and science of the gendered toy marketing debate. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 149, 769–784. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3080-3>.
- Fulcher, M., & Hayes, A. R. (2018). Building a pink dinosaur: The effects of gendered construction toys on girls' and boys' play. *Sex Roles*, 79, 273–284. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0806-3>.
- Hassinger-Das, B., Toub, T. S., Zosh, J. M., Michnick, J., Golinkoff, R., & Hirsh-Pasek, K. (2017) More than just fun: a place for games in playful learning / Más que diversión: el lugar de los juegos reglados en el aprendizaje lúdico. *Journal for the Study of Education and Development*, 40(2), 191-218. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02103702.2017.1292684>.
- Heikkilä, M. (2022). Boys, weapon toys, war play and meaning-making: Prohibiting play in early childhood education settings? *Early Child Development and Care*, 192(11), 1830-1841. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2021.1943377>.
- Iceland, J., Silver, E., & Redstone, I. (2023). *Why we disagree about*

inequality. Social justice vs. social order. Polity.

Josephidou, J. (2020). A gendered contribution to play? Perceptions of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) practitioners in England on how their gender influences their approaches to play. *Early Years*, 40(1), 95-108. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2019.1655713>.

King, R. A., Scott, K. E., Renno, M. P., & Shutts, K. (2020). Counterstereotyping can change children's thinking about boys' and girls' toy preferences. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 191, 104753. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1016/j.jecp.2019.104753>.

Lindon, J. (2001). *Understanding children's play*. Nelson Thornes Ltd.

Martin, C. L., & Halverson, C. F. (1981). A schematic processing model of sex typing and stereotyping in children. *Child Development*, 52, 1119–1134. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1129498>.

Mertala, P., Karikoski, H., Tähtinen, L., & Sarenius, V.-M. (2016). The value of toys: 6–8-year-old children's toy preferences and the functional analysis of popular toys. *International Journal of Play*, 5(1), 11-27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21594937.2016.1147291>.

Morales-Murillo, C.-P., Grau-Sevilla, M.-D., McWilliam, R. A., & García-Grau, P. (2020). Quality of the early childhood education environment and interactions, and their relationship with time dedicated to free play (Calidad del entorno y de las interacciones en educación infantil y su relación con el tiempo

- dedicado al juego libre). *Journal for the Study of Education and Development*, 43(2), 395-442.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02103702.2019.1696080>
- Owen, P. R., & Padron, M. (2016). The language of toys: Gendered language in toy advertisements. *Journal of Research on Women and Gender*, 6, 67-80.
- Plan International. (2017). *Synthesis Report. Research into Gender Equality and Early Childhood Development in Eleven Countries in Asia*. Plan International. https://plan-international.org/uploads/2022/01/aro-gender_eccd_research_synthesis_report-finalnopics-io-jun17.pdf.
- Plan International, Transform Education, UNGEI & UNICEF. (2021). M. Gibbs (Ed.). *Gender Transformative Education*. UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/media/113166/file/Gender%20Transformative%20Education.pdf>.
- Pliogou, V. (2021). Design and development of educational interventions on gender perspective: Teachers' raising awareness on issues of discrimination and gender equality. In A. B. Barragán Martín, Á. M. Martínez, M. M. Jurado, M. S. Márquez, M. C. Pérez-Fuentes (Eds.), *La Convivencia Escolar: Un acercamiento multidisciplinar para la intervención en contextos educativos* (Capítulo 13, pp. 135-147). Dykinson, S.L.
- Power, T.G. (2000). *Play and exploration in children and animals*. Lawrence Erlbaum.

- Prioletta, J. & Pyle, A. (2017). Play and gender in Ontario kindergarten classrooms: Implications for literacy learning. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 25(4), 393-408. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2017.1390446>.
- Prisk, C. (2022). Scholarly snapshots: the importance of child play as a human right. *International Journal of Play*, 11(4), 471-474. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21594937.2022.2103885>.
- Scarlett, W.G., Naudeau, S., Salonijs-Pasternak, D., & Ponte, I. (2005). *Children's play*. Sage Publications.
- Shrewsbury, C. M. (1997). What is Feminist Pedagogy? *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 25(1/2), 166-173.
- United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). (2018). *Learning through play. Strengthening learning through play in early childhood education programmes*. UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2018-12/UNICEF-Lego-Foundation-Learning-through-Play.pdf>.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO. (2021). *Operational tools to advance gender equality. From access to empowerment in and through education*. UNESCO. <https://www.gcedclearinghouse.org/sites/default/files/resource/s/220030eng.pdf>.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2022). *Education starts early: progress, challenges and opportunities; conference background report. World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education*,

- Tashkent, 2022. UNESCO.
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383668>.
- United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI). (2023). *Learning brief: Ending gender stereotypes in schools: good practices, experiences and lessons learned*. UNGEI.
https://www.ungei.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/UNGEI_Learning_Brief-Ending_Gender_Stereotypes_V8.pdf.
- VVOB. (2018). *Putting SDG4 into practice. Learning through play. Technical Brief No.3. VVOB Education for Development*.
https://www.vvob.org/sites/belgium/files/2018_vvob_technical-brief_learning-through-play_web.pdf.
- Weisgram, E. S. (2018). Gender typing of toys in historical and contemporary contexts. In
- Weisgram, E. S., & Bruun, S.T. (2018). *Gender typing of children's toys: How early play experiences impact development* (pp. 9–22). American Psychological Association.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0000077-002>.
- Weisgram, E. S., & Bruun, S.T. (2018). Predictors of gender-typed toy purchases by prospective parents and mothers: the roles of childhood experiences and gender attitudes. *Sex Roles*, 79, 342–357. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-018-0928-2>.
- Weisgram, E. S., & Dinella, L. M. (Eds.). (2018). *Gender-typing of children's toys: Causes, consequences, and correlates*. American Psychological Association.
- Weisgram, E. S., Fulcher, M., & Dinella, L. M. (2014). Pink gives girls

- permission: Exploring the roles of explicit gender labels and gender-typed colors on preschool children's toy preferences. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 35, 401–409. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2014.06.004>.
- Weisgram, E. S. (2016). The cognitive construction of gender stereotypes: Evidence for the dual pathways model of gender differentiation. *Sex Roles*, 75, 301–313. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-016-0624-z>.
- Weisgram, E. S. (2019). Reducing gender stereotypes in toys and play for smarter, stronger, and kinder kids. *American Journal of Play*, 12, 74-88.
- Wingrave, M. (2016). Perceptions of gender in early years. *Gender and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2016.1258457>.
- Whitebread, D., Basilio, M., Kuvalja, M., & Verma, M. (2012). *The importance of play. A report on the value of children's play with a series of policy recommendations*. University of Cambridge. <https://www.csap.cam.ac.uk/media/uploads/files/1/david-whitebread---importance-of-play-report.pdf>.
- Zosh, J. M., Hirsh-Pasek, K., Hopkins, E. J., Jensen, H., Liu, C., Neale, D., Solis, S. L., & Whitebread, D. (2018). *Assessing the Inaccessible: Redefining Play as a Spectrum*. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 1124. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01124>.
- Zosh, J. M., Hopkins, E. J., Jensen, H., Liu, C., Neale, D., Hirsh-Pasek, K., Solis, S. L., & Whitebread, D. (2017). *Learning through play: a review of the evidence (white paper)*. The LEGO

Foundation,

DK.

<https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.16823.01447>.

Source of photos:

1. <https://www.facebook.com/lettoysbetoys/photos/the-entertainer-is-one-of-the-worst-culprits-for-gendered-toy-segregation-and-ou/154036878096726/>
2. <https://www.dw.com/en/gendered-toys-prove-were-a-long-way-from-equal-play/g-18652282>
3. https://www.reddit.com/r/Feminism/comments/4ohglw/sexist_toys_how_is_this_still_a_thing_in_the_21st/
4. <https://www.lettoysbetoys.org.uk/why-it-matters/>
5. <https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/consumers-dont-see-gender-as-binary-so-why-are-toys-still-pink-and-blue/>
6. https://www.reddit.com/r/pointlesslygendered/comments/z24g12/a_classic_set_of_pointlessly_gendered_toys/?rdt=35050
7. https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fsecret-garden-toys.myshopify.com%2Fcollections%2Fplaymobil&psig=AOvVaw1I rAfgtKM IIRsnQkMVTU&ust=1699390678849000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=2ahUKEwj065_fobCCAxXahPOH HaluBuwQr4kDegQIARBh
8. <https://pixabay.com/photos/teddy-bear-stuffed-animal-teddy-3599680/>
9. <https://www.istockphoto.com/photos/old-red-tricycle-from->

childhood

10. <https://www.toys-shop.gr/en/p/toys/puzzle/kid-puzzle/200-250pcs/1009711-ravensburger-200xxl-pcs-puzzle-puppies-12765.html>
- 11,12,13, 14, 15,16,18. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/gender-neutral-toys-that-arent-pink-or-blue_n_5be9e960e4b044bbb1a77a4c
17. <https://www.game.co.za/Baby%2C-Toddlers-%26-Kids/Indoor-Toys/Puzzles-%26-Games/p/000000000000817870>

WHAT DO PARENTS LOOK FOR IN ECEC PROGRAMS?
UNDERSTANDING PRIORITIES, PROCESSES AND
MECHANISMS USED BY CYPRIOT AND DUTCH
PARENTS WHEN SELECTING ECEC PROGRAMS

Konstantina RENTZOU

Assistant professor

Department of Early Years Learning and Care

University of Ioannina

krentzou@uoi.gr

Abstract

Understanding parental ECEC choices and selection mechanisms receives increased attention at the research and policy level as ECEC decision-making has important implications both for policy development and program design. The present study aimed at exploring the processes and mechanisms adopted by parents in Cyprus and in the Netherlands while deciding on and selecting an ECEC program for their child. Research results revealed that participants have opted to enroll their child for professional, socialization, learning and development reasons. Social networks and the internet were the

primary sources of information about available programs. Turning to the criteria that matter most, instructional and structural characteristics received higher ratings. Most of the aspects of the decision-making process have been affected by whether parents were natives or immigrants. Results highlight that the decision-making process is a complex phenomenon and that parents need to tradeoff intrinsic or extrinsic characteristics while selecting an ECEC program.

Keywords: accommodations; Cyprus; early childhood education and care; parental choice; parental preferences; program decisions; The Netherlands

Abstrakt

Kuptimi i zgjedhjes dhe mekanizmave të përzgjedhjes të prindërve për shërbimet ECEC merr vëmendje më të madhe në nivelin e kërkimit dhe politikave pasi vendimmarrja e ECEC ka implikime të rëndësishme si për zhvillimin e politikave ashtu edhe për hartimin e programit. Studimi aktual synon të eksplorojë proceset dhe mekanizmat e adoptuar nga prindërit në Qipro dhe në Holandë, ndërsa vendosin dhe zgjedhin një program ECEC për fëmijën e tyre. Rezultatet e hulumtimit zbuluan se pjesëmarrësit kanë zgjedhur të regjistrojnë fëmijën e tyre për arsye profesionale, socializimi, mësimi dhe zhvillimi. Rrjetet sociale dhe interneti ishin burimet kryesore të informacionit rreth programeve të disponueshme. Duke iu kthyer kritereve që kanë më

shumë rëndësi, karakteristikat mësimore dhe strukturore morën vlerësime më të larta. Shumica e aspekteve të procesit të vendimmarrjes janë prekur nga fakti nëse prindërit ishin vendas apo emigrantë. Rezultatet theksojnë se procesi i vendimmarrjes është një fenomen kompleks dhe se prindërit duhet të shkëmbejnë karakteristikat e brendshme ose të jashtme gjatë përzgjedhjes së një programi ECEC.

Fjalë kyçe: akomodime; Qipro; edukimi dhe kujdesi në fëmijërinë e hershme; zgjedhja e prindërve; preferencat e prindërve; vendimet e programit; Holanda

Introduction

Although selecting an early childhood education and care (hereafter referred to as ECEC) setting is among the most important choices parents are called to make on behalf of their children (Ferguson et al., 2022), there is a gap both at the policy and at the research level, concerning the priorities, processes and mechanisms that parents use in order to select ECEC for their child. At the policy level, it is postulated that policies are based on “inaccurate and overly simplified estimations of parental knowledge, priorities and breadth of choices in regard to preschool” (Grogan, 2011, p. 6). At the research level, although existing research has contributed significantly into “deepening and expanding” (Ferguson et al., 2022) our knowledge on the dynamic process of ECEC program selection and the multitude of factors that

affect and shape that selection, there is a unanimous agreement among researchers that there are still many gaps in our understanding about how parents make ECEC decisions and whether available options respond to the priorities, resources, and needs of parents (e.g. Chaudry et al., 2010; Ferguson et al., 2022; Davidson et al., 2022; Forry et al., 2014; Kim & Fram, 2009). Chaudry et al. (2010, p. 2) synthesize the gaps in research into the following: “understanding of (1) parental preferences for particular kinds and qualities of care and the social and personal factors that inform their preferences and direct child care searches; (2) parents’ knowledge and beliefs about the range of viable choices to which they have access to and how knowledge and beliefs vary across parents in different circumstances; (3) variation in the opportunities and constraints that shape parental decisions across different contexts, family circumstances, and child needs; and (4) the processes parents use to select care arrangements given multiple role demands, and the multiplicity and simultaneity of decisions being negotiated at any point in time”.

Given that understanding parental ECEC selection processes is necessary as parents’ decisions and selection affect children’s experiences (Stout Sosinsky & Kim, 2013), and based on research results which highlight that there is a discrepancy between parents’ preferences and actual choices (Kensinger Rose & Elicker, 2010), the present study aimed at unveiling the ECEC decision-making processes and mechanisms employed by Cypriot and Dutch parents.

The ECEC decision-making process

The ECEC decision-making process is not linear but rather complex, multi-dimensional and multi-faceted, as it is embedded inside a large ecological context (Ferguson et al., 2022) and it is affected by multiple factors both at the child and parent-family level (e.g. working hours and arrangements), but also at the level of the society within which families operate (e.g. availability and accessibility of services). Given the multitude of factors that affect the decision-making process, Meyers & Jordan (2006, p. 53) refer to parental decisions as “accommodations—to family and employment demands, social and cultural expectations, available information, and financial, social, and other resources—that often reproduce other forms of economic and social stratification”.

In order to understand and explain the complexity and multifacetedness of the ECEC decision-making process, various models and frameworks have been developed (Table 1).

Table 1. ECEC decision-making models

Model		Main characteristics
The Economic Consumer Framework of Decision Making (Chaudry et al., 2010)	Choice of Making	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emphasis on individual decision-making 2. “Individuals make a decision that maximizes their satisfaction by considering the tradeoffs among the

alternatives they face relative to their preferences” (Chaudry et al., 2010, p. 4)

3. Choices are subject to constraints
4. Focus on the outcome rather than on the process of the ECEC decision

Heuristics and Biases Framework (Chaudry et al., 2020)

1. Emphasis on rational decision-making
2. “Ability of actors to engage in the kind of careful, reasoned decisions of the form suggested by an economic model of consumer choice” (Chaudry et al., 2020, p. 10)
3. “When making decisions, the calculus of tradeoffs is shaped by cognitive biases that influence the calculus itself” (Chaudry et al., 2020, p. 10).
4. Emphasis on the decision-making process rather than the outcome

A Social Network Framework for Decision Making (Chaudry et al., 2020)

1. “Emphasis on how individual decisions are shaped by social interactions and the resources embedded within them” (Chaudry et al., 2010, p. 17).
-

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Emphasis on the decision-making process rather than the outcome
<p>The Accommodation Model: An Integrative Perspective (Chaudry et al., 2020)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Used as a lens to unveil the complexity of the decision-making process and its multiple determinants. 2. Decision-making on ECEC programs is inter-dependent to other decisions related to work and family life. 3. Multiple constraints at the individual and structural levels limit parental choices 4. Emphasis on both the process and the outcomes of decisions
<p>Weber's (2011) framework</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family and community characteristics form the decision-making context. 2. Out of these contextual factors, several parental preferences emerge. 3. Yet the actual decision is shaped by the opportunities, constraints, and barriers families face during the selection process.

-
4. At this stage policy effects are entering into the equation and shape parents' actual decision.
 5. The interaction of all these factors leads to the selection of arrangements
-

These models are complementary, rather than mutually exclusive and they give an insight on the process and outcomes of the ECEC decision-making process (Chaudry et al., 2010).

In addition to the models that can be used to understand and explain the ECEC decision-making process, equally important is to unveil the criteria that families use in order to select a program. Reviewing the existing literature, Rentzou (2023) taxonomizes these criteria into *practical* (e.g. program hours, location, cost, etc.), *structural* (e.g. ratio and group size, educators' education and experience, facilities, etc.), *process* (e.g. emotional climate, home-school collaboration, quality of educators' interaction with children, etc.), and *instructional* (e.g. school readiness, stimulating activities, child-centered orientation, etc.).

Design of the study: Research methodology and methods

Aim and research questions

Given that research findings on the scope (e.g., number of providers considered), duration (e.g., length of search process), and

sources of information considered during ECEC decision-making process are sparse and, at times, inconsistent (Forry et al., 2014, p. 996), the present mixed-methods comparative research study aims to fill some of the above-mentioned gaps in existing knowledge and to expand current thinking about ECEC program decision-making by exploring the processes and mechanisms adopted by parents in Cyprus and in the Netherlands while deciding on and selecting an ECEC program for their child. Building on existing knowledge and employing the accommodation model proposed by Chaudry et al. (2010) as a theoretical foundation, the study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. What is the decision-making process (scope, duration, sources of information, number of settings considered) employed by Cypriot and Dutch parents?
2. What are the criteria that mattered the most to parents when they selected the ECEC program for their child?
3. How difficult, is according to Cypriot and Dutch parents the decision-making process?
4. Are there any differences in decision-making process and the selection criteria used, among Cypriot and Dutch parents?

Participants

Data for the present comparative study was collected by 100 parents, 58 of whom were living in Cyprus and 41 in the Netherlands. Across

both countries, 94% of the respondents were mothers and for 60% of them the country of origin was different than the country of residence. 57% of them were between 35 and 44 years of age and 46% of them had a master's degree. 60.2% of the participants were working full time and 85.9% of them were married. The majority of the participants (53%) had only one child. The mean age of the child of the parents living in Cyprus was 3.20 years and the mean age of the child of the parents living in the Netherlands was 2.59 years. When asked how long their child is enrolled in the program, most of the participants (38.9%) responded 12-24 months. Most of the children (43.3%) are staying at the ECEC program for 7-8 hours per day, whereas 28.9% for 5-6 hours. According to 61.5% of the respondents their child has attended only one more ECEC program apart from the one that attends now and 30.8% reported that their child has attended two other programs.

Measures and procedures

After reviewing the literature and based on the accommodation model proposed by Chaudry et al. (2010) the author developed a questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of six sections, with both open-ended and closed questions. Section one includes eighteen questions about parents' and family's demographics. Section two includes eleven questions on the demographics of the child for whom the questionnaire is completed as well as on children's ECEC experience (e.g. how long does the child is enrolled in the setting, how many hours per day is staying at the program, etc.) and the reasons why

parents have opted to enroll their child to an ECEC program. Section three includes six questions on the characteristics of the ECEC program that the child attends. Section four includes thirteen questions on the ECEC program selection process (e.g. which resources did parents use to select the program, how many programs did they visit, how easy is the process of selecting a program, etc.). Section five includes two questions on the selection criteria that mattered most to parents. Based on the literature review, 45 characteristics were identified, and participants were asked to indicate how much each of them affected their final decision, using a 5-point Likert scale. Finally, section six included seven questions about parents' satisfaction with the selected program, the characteristics that they had to tradeoff and those that they would change in the selected setting.

The questionnaire was developed in Greek and in English and was administered online both in Cyprus and in the Netherlands.

Results

The main reason why parents in Cyprus have enrolled their child in an ECEC program is because such programs can support better children's learning and development (64.3%). In addition, parents living in Cyprus have enrolled their children in an ECEC program for professional reasons (66.1%) and in order for children to socialize (66.1%). The same reasons have gained the higher ratings from parents living in the Netherlands, as well. Yet in the Netherlands professional reasons (75.6%) and ECEC programs' contribution to children's

socialization (75.6%) received higher positive responses as opposed to ECEC programs' support to children's learning and development (70.7%). In addition, in the Netherlands a high percentage of participants (43.7%) reported that they enrolled their child in an ECEC program in order for the child to learn the native language. On the other hand, in Cyprus a relatively high percent of parents (32.1%) reported that they enrolled their child in an ECEC program in order to learn about discipline and rules. Crosstab analysis has revealed that there is a significant association between country of residence and enrolling children to a program to learn about discipline and rules ($\chi^2 (2) = 9.89$, $p = .007$) as well as enrolling children to a program to learn the native language ($\chi^2 (2) = 18.66$, $p = .000$).

Turning to the resources that parents have used in order to collect information about available ECEC programs for the total sample the two main sources of information that have been used are friends (70.1%) and the internet (60.8%). Great variations have been found among countries. In Cyprus the three main sources of information are friends (81.8%), the internet (47.3%) and lists available from social services and/or the Ministry of education (34.5%). In the Netherlands, the three main sources of information are the internet (80.5%), friends (53.7%) and colleagues (26.8%).

As far as the resources parents used to select the program they did are concerned and how did they learn about the selected program, friends (47.9%) and the internet (47.9%) were reported as the main sources of information for selecting the program. In Cyprus, the three main sources of information about the selected program were friends

(61.1%), the internet (29.6%) and the lists available from social services and/or the Ministry of education (29.6%). In the Netherlands on the other hand, the three main sources of information were the internet (74.4%), friends (28.2%) and colleagues (17.9%).

The importance of recommendations was also revealed when parents were asked to describe the process they followed before their final selection. Out of the 76 parents who replied to the question, 32 of them mentioned that they visited the program before their final decision. 14 out of the 76 mentioned that they visited programs for which they had recommendations from friends and 11 out of the 76 mentioned that they collected information about the programs available using the internet, available lists, statistics, etc. 23 out of the 76 parents mentioned that they visited programs that they were close to their home/work.

As far as the ECEC program decision process is concerned parents in both countries have visited 2.78 programs before they reached their final decision. Table 2 presents results related to the ECEC program decision-making process adopted by parents living in Cyprus and in the Netherlands. Crosstab analysis indicated that there is a significant association between country of residence and the extent to which participants consider that the information from the state is adequate ($\chi^2(8) = 32.52, p. = .000$).

Table 2. The preschool program decision-making process

Indicator	Cyprus			The Netherlands		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Number of preschool programs parents visited before their final selection	51	3.12	.220	40	2.40	.237
Agreement between partners about the selection of the program	53	4.62	.118	41	4.73	.131
Adequacy of information offered by the state about the available preschool programs in the city	54	2.24	.140	41	3.46	.175
Agreement with the statement: "There are plenty of good choices for child care where I live".	55	3.11	.151	41	3.66	.166
Difficulty of the process of selecting a preschool program	55	2.84	.157	40	3.23	.170

Turning to the time it took for parents to reach their final decision,

analysis indicated that it took less than a week for the 27.8% of parents in Cyprus and for 37.5% of parents in the Netherlands. For 18.5% of parents in Cyprus versus 12.5% of parents in the Netherlands, it took one week to reach their final decision. For 11.1% of parents in Cyprus and 25% of parents in the Netherlands, it took two weeks, whereas for 25.9% of parents in Cyprus and for 12.5% of parents in the Netherlands it took three to four weeks to reach their final decision. Finally, 16.7% of parents in Cyprus and 12.5% of parents in the Netherlands reported that it took them more than a month to reach their final decision.

Finally, as far as the selection criteria that mattered the most to parents analysis indicated that the highest scores were assigned to the instructional (M for total sample = 3.23; S.D. = 1.16) and the structural (M for total sample = 3.07; S.D. = 1.14) characteristics of the program, rather than on the practical (M for total sample = 2.13; S.D. = .82) and process characteristics (M for total sample = 2.79; S.D. = .085). Table 3 presents the Means assigned to each of the criteria in both countries.

Table 3. Criteria that mattered the most to parents

Criteria	Cyprus	The Netherlands
Practical	2.14 (.82)	2.12 (.76)
Process	2.89 (.91)	2.68 (.73)
Structural	3.20 (1.23)	2.95 (1.01)
Instructional	3.28 (1.23)	3.22 (1.06)

Discussion

Drawing from previous research which highlights that although there

is adequate research on the ECEC program selection criteria that matter most to parents there are still gaps related to the decision-making process as a whole, the present study aimed at expanding current thinking by exploring the processes and mechanisms adopted by parents in Cyprus and the Netherlands while deciding on and selecting a program for their child. To the best of our knowledge, no previous research has explored parental decision-making in neither of these two countries. Results of the present study confirm previous results which indicate that the parental decision-making process is a multi-faceted phenomenon (Weber, 2011), that is impacted by family and community characteristics, parental values and beliefs, resources and needs (Kim & Fram, 2009).

According to Kim & Fram (2009), the first step to ECEC program decision-making is parents' choice to use non-parental care "and the reasons for using ECEC programs are an important context for understanding more nuanced choices among non-parental care arrangements" (p. 78). Interestingly in our study parents have not taken such a decision for financial reasons (i.e. they have to work), but equally for professional reasons and for the child to socialize. Thus, in both countries parents feel that ECEC programs can support better children's learning and development. This triptych has been also revealed in other studies (Ferguson et al., 2022). Yet, given that the majority of the participants in the Netherlands are immigrants, parents have decided to enroll their child to a program also in order to learn the native language. Given that the majority of our sample consists of dual families and of higher SES, it would be interested to explore further

how this triptych would have changed in cases of single families or low-income families.

Turning to the resources used to collect information about available ECEC programs the internet and friends were the two main sources of information in both countries. Yet analysis indicated that in Cyprus friends were the primary source of information whereas in the Netherlands the second source. This may be explained by the fact that in the Netherlands the majority of participants are not native and as a result, their social networks are not as large as the ones for parents living in Cyprus. This is also evident in the fact that in Cyprus parents have also used relatives as a major source of information, whereas in the Netherlands only 4.9% of the parents used relatives. Another explanation might be that in the Netherlands, there is more information on the internet about the existing programs. This postulation might be supported by the fact that parents in the Netherlands are more satisfied with the adequacy of information about the existing programs in their city. Yet, parents in the Netherlands did not use lists available from social services and the Ministry to collect information about existing programs as much as parents in Cyprus. This might be attributed to language barriers, and to the fact that information might be available primarily in Dutch. The same patterns have been revealed also in terms of the sources parents used to select the program. The internet and friends were the two main sources from which participants heard about their chosen program, with the country of residence affecting the ranking of these resources, as previously. Our results are partly in line with previous research. Raikes et al. (2005) and Chaudry et al. (2010)

have also found that the primary source of information is friends, relatives and other personal networks. In our study, in Cyprus, the majority of the participants heard about the program from a friend. Yet, in the Netherlands, the internet was the primary source of information. This finding substantiates the importance of social networks for the decision-making process (Chaudry et al., 2010). Thus, given that immigrant families do not have access to extended social networks and they rely on other sources, the finding of our study also highlights the need for “informational interventions, that is programs or policies that work by providing individuals with relevant information at key decision-making points” (Bassok et al., 2018, p. 1). Forry et al. (2013) also suggest that “creating a cadre of trusted child care advisors who can listen to families’ unique circumstances and provide guidance that is culturally sensitive would be a potentially valuable service to families”. Such a suggestion acknowledges that in order to be effective interventions should be taking into account family’s needs and background and adopt properly in order to tackle barriers such as language and difficulty in orienting in a foreign system. At the same time, given that previous research has indicated that information about ECEC programs is imperfect (Meyers & Jordan, 2006, p. 61) the need for well-organized informational interventions is further substantiated. Before they reach their final decision parents visited approximately three programs and for the majority of them, it took less than a week to reach their final decision. Contrary to the results of the study conducted by Bassok et al. (2018) the parents of our sample have invested time into searching for a setting as they have considered approximately three

programs. This finding is in line with the results of the study conducted by Forry et al. (2014). Yet, in our study participants made their final decision within one week, as opposed to Bassok et al. (2018) and Forry et al. (2014) study.

Overall, participants in both countries indicated that there are some good choices available where they live and that the decision-making process is in average neither easy nor difficult. Turning to the criteria that mattered most to parents when they selected the ECEC programs, analysis revealed that parents paid attention to instructional and structural characteristics of the program, rather than to practical and process characteristics.

Conclusion

The present study yielded important results and add significantly to existing research in the field of parental ECEC decision-making as it addressed multiple aspects of the process. One of the important findings of the present study is the differences and similarities immigrant and native parents may encounter during the decision-making phase. Overall, parents searched carefully for a suitable program for their child. Based on whether they are native or immigrants different sources of information have been used, a finding that has implications both for policymakers and programs. In addition, parents seem to assign greater importance to instructional and structural characteristics of the programs whereas they seem to be trading off practical considerations in favor of quality dimensions. Yet, future

research should explore how these trends might change among low SES parents. Results highlight the need both for parent education, parenting support programs and interventions that can empower them in selecting high-quality programs and support them in the decision-making process. At the same time, policy actions should be targeted at ensuring flexibility and affordability of ECEC as well as integrated support of the dual role of parents.

References

- Bassok, D., A.J. Markowitz, D. Player, and M. Zagardo, M. 2018. Are parents' ratings and satisfaction with preschools related to program features? *AERA Open*, 4(1), 1-17. DOI: 10.1177/2332858418759954.
- Chaudry, A., Henly, J., & Meyers, M. (2010). *ACF-OPRE White Paper: Conceptual Frameworks for Child Care Decision-Making*. Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Washington, DC.
- Davidson, A.M., Burns, S., Hampton, D., White, L., & Perlman, M. (2022). Policy frameworks and parental choice: Using conjoint analysis to understand parental decision making for child care. *Journal of Family Issues*, 43(5), 1335-1363. DOI: 10.1177/0192513X211022386.
- Ferguson, J., Lampkins, C., Moody, B., & Shpancer, N. (2022). Careful choices: Parents reflect on their childcare decisions. *Child Care*

in Practice, 28(3), 368-380 DOI:
10.1080/13575279.2020.1765147

Forry, N., Isner, T.K., Daneri, M.P., & Tout, K. (2014). Child care decision making: Understanding priorities and processes used by low-income families in Minnesota. *Early Education and Development*, 25, 995–1015. DOI:
[10.1080/10409289.2014.893758](https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2014.893758)

Forry, N. D., K. Tout, L. Rothenberg, H. Sandstrom, and C. Vesely. 2013. *Child care decision- making literature review. OPRE Brief 2013-45*. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Grogan, K.E. (2011). *Parents' choice of pre-kindergarten: A transactional ecological approach*. [PhD Dissertation]. Georgia State University.
http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/psych_diss/83

Kensinger Rose, K., & Elicker, J. (2010). Maternal child care preferences for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers: The disconnect between policy and preference in the USA. *Community, Work and Family*, 13(2), 205-229. DOI:
[10.1080/13668800903314366](https://doi.org/10.1080/13668800903314366)

Kim, J., & Fram, M.S. (2009). Profiles of choice: Parents' patterns of priority in child care decision-making. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 24, 77-91. DOI:
10.1016/j.ecresq.2008.10.001.

Meyers, M.K., & Jordan, L.P. (2006). Choice and accommodation in

parental child care decisions. *COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: Journal of the Community Development Society*, 37(2), 53-70.
DOI: [10.1080/15575330609490207](https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330609490207)

- Raikes, H., B. Wilcox, C. Peterson, S. Hegland, J. Atwater, J. A. Summers, K. Thornburg, J. Scott, W. Mayfield, J. Torquati, & C. P. Edwards. (2005). *Parent perceptions of child care choice and quality in four states*. Publications of the Center on Children, Families, and the Law (and related organizations). Paper 14. Accessed 8 November 2021.
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/ccflpubs/14>
- Rentzou, K. (2023). Early childhood education and care program decision-making: A comparative study on program choices and selection mechanisms. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 10(3), 164-184.
- Stout Sosinsky, L., & Kim, S.K. (2013). A profile approach to child care quality, quantity, and type of setting: Parent selection of infant child care arrangements. *Applied Developmental Science*, 17(1), 39-56, DOI: 10.1080/10888691.2013.750196.
- Weber, R. (2011). *Understanding parents' child care decision-making: A foundation for policy making*, OPRE Research-to-Policy, Research-to-Practice Brief OPRE 2011-12. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ILLUSTRATIONS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NARRATIVE SKILLS IN PRESCHOOLERS

Rriollza AGOLLI

Assistant Lecturer, Universiteti Fan S. Noli. Korçë, Albania

ragolli@unkorce.edu.al

Laura AGOLLI

Ankara Haci Bayram Veli Universitesi, Ankara, Turkey

agolli.laura@hbv.edu.tr

Abstract

The development of narrative skills in preschool children is crucial for their growth and academic success. Researchers have found that these skills serve as predictors of later literacy achievements, underlining the integral relationship between language and literacy. Narrative abilities, which extend beyond simple sentence structures, are essential for effective communication and are commonly utilized in literacy and developmental contexts.

This study focuses on the teaching and learning of narrative skills,

particularly through storytelling, in a preschool setting. Utilizing a qualitative research approach, the study examines the socially constructed nature of reality and emphasizes the interaction between the researcher and the subjects.

The research investigates how storytelling, specifically through illustrated fairy tales, impacts children's narrative skills and language development. Findings reveal that illustrations play a significant role in aiding children's comprehension and interpretation of stories. Through storytelling, children not only develop narrative skills but also expand their vocabulary, enhance listening and understanding abilities, and stimulate expressive reactions.

Moreover, the study discusses the theoretical frameworks of language and cognitive development proposed by Vygotsky and Piaget, highlighting the interplay between language, thinking, and experience in children's cognitive growth.

Illustrations in children's books are recognized as powerful tools for linguistic, cognitive, and artistic development. Well-illustrated books contribute to sensory perception, emotional expression, and cognitive processes in children. It is emphasized that illustrations should be coherent with the text and challenge children's imagination while reflecting familiar elements from their environment.

Overall, the study underscores the importance of illustrated books in fostering holistic development in children, emphasizing both linguistic and cognitive aspects.

Keywords: narrative skills, preschool children, literacy development,

interaction, cognitive development

Abstrakt

Zhvillimi i aftësive narrative tek fëmijët parashkollorë është vendimtar për rritjen dhe suksesin e tyre akademik. Studiuesit kanë zbuluar se këto aftësi shërbejnë si parashikues të arritjeve të mëvonshme të shkrim-leximit, duke nënvizuar marrëdhënien integrale midis gjuhës dhe shkrim-leximit. Aftësitë narrative, të cilat shtrihen përtej strukturave të thjeshta të fjalive, janë thelbësore për komunikim efektiv dhe zakonisht përdoren në kontekstet e shkrim-leximit dhe zhvillimit. Ky studim fokusohet në mësimdhënien dhe të nxënit e aftësive narrative, veçanërisht nëpërmjet tregimit, në një mjedis parashkollor. Duke përdorur një qasje kërkimore cilësore, studimi shqyrton natyrën e ndërtuar shoqërore të realitetit dhe thekson ndërveprimin midis studiuesit dhe subjekteve.

Hulumtimi heton sesi tregimi, veçanërisht përmes përrallave të ilustruara, ndikon në aftësitë narrative të fëmijëve dhe zhvillimin gjuhësor. Gjetjet tregojnë se ilustrimet luajnë një rol të rëndësishëm për të ndihmuar fëmijët të kuptojnë dhe interpretojnë tregimet. Nëpërmjet tregimit, fëmijët jo vetëm që zhvillojnë aftësitë narrative, por gjithashtu zgjerojnë fjalorin e tyre, përmirësojnë aftësitë e të dëgjuarit dhe të kuptuarit dhe stimulojnë reagimet shprehëse.

Për më tepër, studimi diskuton kornizat teorike të gjuhës dhe zhvillimit kognitiv të propozuar nga Vygotsky dhe Piaget, duke theksuar ndërveprimin midis gjuhës, të menduarit dhe përvojës në rritjen

konjitive të fëmijëve.

Ilustrimet në librat e fëmijëve njihen si mjete të fuqishme për zhvillimin gjuhësor, njohës dhe artistik. Librat e mirë-ilustruar kontribuojnë në perceptimin ndijor, shprehjen emocionale dhe proceset njohëse të fëmijët. Theksohet se ilustrimet duhet të jenë koherente me tekstin dhe të sfidojnë imagjinatën e fëmijëve duke pasqyruar elementë të njohur të mjedisit të tyre.

Në përgjithësi, studimi nënvizon rëndësinë e librave të ilustruar në nxitjen e zhvillimit holistik të fëmijët, duke theksuar si aspektet gjuhësore ashtu edhe ato njohëse.

Fjalët kyçe: aftësitë narrative, fëmijët parashkollorë, zhvillimi i shkrim-leximit, ndërveprim, zhvillim kognitiv

Introduction

The development of narrative skills is highly significant in the growth and advancement of preschool children. According to some researchers, narrative abilities in preschool are believed to serve as predictors of later success in school, highlighting the importance of the connection between language and literacy (Bashir & Scavuzzo, 1992; Paulet al., 1996; Paul & Smith, 1993; Peterson, Jesso, & McCabe, 1999; Peterson and McCabe, 1994; Wallach & Miller, 1988). Considered a form of discourse, they are defined as the ability to express and use language beyond the level of the sentence (Feagans &

Short, 1984). Organized into a microstructure of imaginary or personal events (Hadley, 1998; McCabe, 1997; Paul, Hernandez, Taylor, & Johnson, 1996; Peterson, Jesso, & McCabe, 1999), they are a form of communication commonly used in literacy and other developmental fields (Bliss, McCabe, & Miranda, 1998).

In written texts used for early childhood, narrative forms are widely found, allowing for a smooth transition from oral storytelling to reading and writing within a narrative structure, as used in schools (Dickinson & McCabe, 1991; McCabe, 1997).

There are various definitions and models of reading and writing. One definition is that reading and writing are a dialogic process that encourages full access to written text (Prinsloo & Bloch, 1999). The common understanding of reading and writing is that it is perceived as a social practice. The general concept shared by almost all literacy researchers is that reading and writing are socio-cultural phenomena (Prinsloo & Bloch, 1999). Thus, reading and writing, as a function in society, are not seen as a transfer of skills from the teacher to the child through activities but as an interactive process between an adult and a child. Viewing reading and writing as a social practice aligns with the idea of language competence in society, demonstrable and applicable for communication and access to information.

Like other language skills, narrative skills follow a developmental trajectory that requires children, from early childhood to elementary school years, to increasingly describe events removed from the current context, making them decontextualized (Paul & Smith, 1993; Peterson et al., 1999; Snow, 1983; Snow & Dickinson, 1990). Discussing such

decontextualized events creates a macrostructure or specific frame that can aid understanding (Kamhi, 1997).

In this study, we have relied on a qualitative research approach, based on the findings of Denzin & Lincoln (2005), where qualitative researchers examine the socially constructed nature of reality and the relationship between the researcher and the studied entity. In this case, the qualitative approach analyzes narrative information in an organized manner, allowing flexibility (Brink et al., 2006) and focusing on the understanding and interpretation of participants (Holloway & Wheeler, 1995).

The study focused on the teaching and learning process, paying particular attention to storytelling. Based on Labov's narrative structural characteristics, which include: abstract, orientation, complicating action or sequence (events leading to the climax of the story), evaluation of emotions and resolution, including the description of what happens (Peterson & McCabe, 1991), and relying on four known types of knowledge necessary for storytelling; knowledge of content including presentations of events, memories, and knowledge of social interactions, narrative structural knowledge, micro-linguistic knowledge of various types of conjunctions (and, then, etc.), verb tenses, and pronouns; contextual knowledge in a preschool group context (Hudson & Shapiro, 1991), age 5-6 years, in May, the teacher of the experimental group and once (children were introduced to the group), narrative parts for fairy tales "Three Butterflies", only verbally, without being illustrated or using didactic tools, and the fairy tale "Little Rose" illustrated with illustrations and didactic tools were

presented. The teacher followed the instructions mentioned above and asked the children to verbally reproduce them in these steps: present the fairy tale to the large group and retell it individually, aiming at paraphrasing as observers would expect.

Findings

It is a fact that children show sensitivity to illustrations, and there is no doubt that they play an important role in children's books. In general, for most children, understanding a code based on illustrations was much easier than understanding a verbal code, being more direct (Hall, 1990). Through them, children found it easier to interpret the text (Hall, 1990). It was noticed that illustrations sometimes provided more details of the text than words could explain. Seguni (Segun, 1988) and Steingu (Stewig, 1972) show that even for children who can read, illustrations can help them understand the text better. From what we have gathered, it can be said that in the case of the two fairy tales illustrated, attention was explicitly drawn in a manner suitable for age and ability (Bliss et al., 1998). The children had different, but fully elaborated responses in terms of structural characteristics, such as the length and complexity of the narrative events. They gained unique opportunities to practice narrative skills (Sulzby & Zecker, 1991), as they are not yet independent readers. They addressed the macrostructure of the stories, gained important knowledge and vocabulary, discussed the narrative in a decontextualized manner, as well as comparing it with what they desired. Additionally, the children developed the necessary experiences

to expand their vocabulary and concepts, providing a natural context for language development aimed at preschool years (Dickinson, 2001). Believing in the power of storytelling, they expanded their attention space, listening, and understanding skills, and consequently enriched their expressive reactions, focusing on these phases: summarization, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, and resolution. From the illustrations, children got the idea of the text through their first visual encounter with the pictures and later understood it. Then the children followed the narrative to get more details about the general idea. Because children enjoy hearing or reading the text, in the presence of illustrations, they seek to reread it and hear it again.

Conclusions

Undoubtedly, this is the best way to improve a child's reading skills. Stewig (Stewing, 1992) adds that children will have two benefits from illustrated materials. They learn how to read within the illustration and enhance their reading ability to read words. Even when words are used in children's books, children understand the text better with illustrative language, and these can serve as stimuli to encourage children's interest in reading.

Known for his research on language development, Vygotsky emphasizes that language develops parallel to thinking (Bodrova & Leong, 2013). According to Vygotsky, the word goes into the structure of the object and thus gains a functional meaning. At the same time, Vygotsky states that the linguistic environment in which the child lives

influences the level of thinking. For this reason, it is emphasized that verbal thinking can be understood by examining the stages of the child's underdeveloped, partial, primitive language. Jean Piaget, who has made significant studies in the field of cognitive development, argues that the development of thought and language in children does not occur through continuity, but through stages, and that the individual becomes effective in environmental relationships (Wadsworth, 1996). According to Piaget, cognitive development is paramount. Language development is a coordination of general cognitive changes, and cognitive development is not influenced by language. In this context, Vygotsky emphasizes that language influences thinking, while Piaget emphasizes experience. Both learning theories need contexts in which an individual can reason and understand to develop cognitively. Arnheim (1986) states that seeing is an active function of the mind, while perception is a cognitive event; ultimately, he emphasizes that interpretation and understanding are integral parts of the act of seeing. It needs to be stimulated both intuitively and cognitively for the mind to function fully. In this context, illustration offers an excellent opportunity for education. It allows the individual to see not only the parts but also the whole (Arnheim, 1986). In this way, illustrations in children's storybooks contribute to their linguistic development, as well as to the creative, intellectual, and artistic development of the child. In the elementary school years (6-8 years old), children display characteristics such as the ability to construct their sentences in different ways, using connectors in their sentences, data in figures, and understanding some abstract expressions. In this context, it is necessary

to interact more with picture books for children prepared with artistic sensitivity to contribute to the linguistic development of children (Alderson, 2000; Bamberger, 1990: 39; Feinstein & Hagerty, 1994).

The culture with which the individual is trained plays a crucial role in interpreting the perspective from various illustrative objects and the realities involved in the individual's life, in its formal understanding and interpretation (Arizpe & Styles, 2003). When children encounter books with illustrations, these processes begin to function. Children comment on the illustrations they see in books in the context of their experience; in other words, they see, hear, and live.

Children can perceive and express new meanings with spoken language. In this context, it is concluded that the process of understanding spoken language is linked to facts and concepts in long-term memory. For this connection to occur, children must be able to use language skills in enriched environments. In this context, language plays an important role in the development of cognitive processes.

Likewise, illustrations contribute to the development of children's sensory perceptions, as they convey emotions and thoughts beyond verbal expression through figures to the child (Yildiz, Yazici & Durmusoglu, 2015).

A well-illustrated children's book (Sever, 2012) is prepared in collaboration with the illustrator, writer, designer, and publisher. Illustrations in books should also include familiar images present in the child's immediate environment but also challenge his imagination. There should be a connection between the illustration and the text; if there is no connection between them, it may cause contradictions in the

child. Another function of figures in children's storybooks is to shed light on the written scenario (Nicholas, 2007). In the illustrated book, the illustrations should be animated, and the details should be relevant to the text (Sirin, 1998).

In this context, the importance of illustrated books for children should not be overlooked, both for the development of artistic and aesthetic abilities and the linguistic and cognitive development of children.

REFERENCES

- Alderson, J.C. (2000). *Assessing Reading*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511732935>
- Arizpe, E.; Styles, M. (2003). *Children reading pictures: Interpreting visual texts*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Arnheim, R. (1986). *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- Bamberger, R. (1990). *Improving Reading Habits*. Ankara: Kultur Bakanligi.
- Bashir, A. S.; Scavuzzo, A. (1992). *Children with language disorders: Natural history and academic success*. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*. 25(1), 53-65.
- Bliss, L. S.; McCabe, A.; Miranda, A. E. (1998). *Narrative assessment profile: Discourse analysis for school-age children*. *Journal of Communication Disorders*, 31, 347-363.
- Bodrova, E.; Leong, D. J. (2007). *The Vygotskian Approach to Early Childhood (2nd ed.)*. Columbus, OH: Merrill/Prentice

Hall. pp. 241-260.

Brink, H. (2006) *Fundamentals of Research Methodology for Health Care Professionals*. 2nd Edition, Juta, Cape Town.

Denzin, N. K.; Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). *Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research*. in N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 1–32). Sage Publications Ltd.

Dickinson, D. K. (2001). *Book reading in preschool classrooms: Is recommended practice common?* In. Dickinson. D. K; Tabors, P. O. (Eds.), *Beginning Language with Literacy*, (pp.175-204). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Feagans, L.; Short, E. J. (1984). *Developmental differences in the comprehension and production of narratives by reading-disabled and normally achieving children*. *Child Development*. 55 .1727-1736.

Feinstein, H.; Hagerty, R. (1994). *Visual literacy in general education*. University of Cincinnati, (pp. 205-212).

Hadley, P. A. (1998). *Language sampling protocols for eliciting text-level discourse*. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*. 29 .132-147.

Hall, S. L.; Moats, L. C. (1999). *Straight Talk About Reading: How parents can make a difference during the early years*. Chicago IL: Contemporary Books.

Holloway, I.; Wheeler, S. (1995). *Ethical Issues in Qualitative Nursing Research*. - *Nursing Ethics* 2 (3):223-232.

Hudson, J. A.; Shaprio, L. R. (1991). *From knowing to telling: The*

development of children's scripts, stories, and personal narratives. in A. McCabe & C. Peterson (Eds.), *Developing Narrative Structure*, (pp. 89-136).

Kamhi, A. G. (1997). *Three Perspectives on comprehension: Implications for assessing and treating comprehension problems.* *Topics in Language Disorders*. 17 (3), 62-74.

McCabe, A. (1997). *Developmental and cross-cultural aspects of children's narration.* in M. Bamberg (Ed.), *Narrative Development: Six Approaches* (pp. 137-174). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc.

Nicholas, J. L. (2007). *An Exploration of the Impact of Picture Book Illustrations on the Comprehension Skills and Vocabulary Development of Emergent Readers.* Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Louisiana State University, Shreveport, ABD.

Paul, R.; Smith, R. L. (1993). *Narrative skills in 4-year-olds with normal, impaired, and late developing language.* *Journal of Speech and Hearing Research*. 36. 592-598.

Paul, R.; Hernandez, R.; Taylor, L.; Johnson, K. (1996). *Narrative development in late talkers: Early school age.* *Journal of Speech and Hearing Research*. 39, 1295-1303.

Peterson, C.; Jesso, B.; McCabe, A. (1999). *Encouraging narratives in preschoolers: An intervention study.* *Journal of Child Language*. 26.49-67.

Peterson, C.; McCabe, A. (1991). *Linking Children's Connective Use and Narrative Macrostructure.* in A. McCabe & C. Peterson (Eds.), *Developing Narrative Structure*, (pp. 29-53). Hillsdale,

- NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc.
- Peterson, C.; McCabe, A. (1994). *A social interactionist account of developing decontextualized narrative skill*. *Developmental Psychology*, 30, 937-948.
- Prinsloo, M.; Breier, M. (1996). *The Social Uses of Literacy*. Amsterdam. John.
- Prinsloo, M.; Bloch, C. (1999). *Children's early literacy learning: the mismatch between policy intention and teacher know-how*. in: L. Chisholm (ed.), *Critical perspectives in South African education: reconstituting the educational realm*. Cape Town: Juta.
- Sever, S. (2012). *Children and literature*. Izmir: Tudem.
- Snow, C. E.; Dickinson, D. K. (1990). *Social sources of narrative skills at home and at school*. *First Language*, 10, 87-103.
- Snow, C. E. (1983). *Literacy and language: Relationships during the preschool years*. *Harvard Educational Review*, 53, 165-189.
- Steig, W. (1982). *Doctor De Soto*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Sulzby, E.; Zecker, L. B. (1991). *The oral monologue as a form of emergent reading*. In McCabe, A.; Peterson, C. (Eds.), *Developing Narrative Structure*. (pp. 175- 213). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc.
- Wadsworth, B. J. (1996). *Piaget's theory of cognitive and affective development: Foundations of constructivism* (5th ed.). Longman Publishing.
- Wallach, G. P.; Miller, L. (1988). *Language Intervention and Academic*

Success. Boston: Little, Brown.

Yildiz, C.; Yazici, D.; Durmusoglu, M. (2015). *Examination of the iconography features of illustrated children's books which published between 2010-2015*. International Journal of Early Childhood Education Studies, 1(1), 43-55.

PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF QUALITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE CENTER

Arjan KAMBURI

Assistant Lecturer, Department of Education
University "Fan S. Noli" of Korçë, Albania
akamburi@unkorce.edu.al

Ilirjana NASE

School Psychologist, DRAP of Korçë, Albania
ilirjananase@gmail.com

Abstract

The objective of this study is to explore how parents or caregivers perceive nursery schools and the services they offer. The involvement and dedication of parents in nursery activities are considered crucial for fostering a positive relationship between families and nurseries and are also seen as essential for enhancing and ensuring the quality of services provided by nurseries. Furthermore, parents perceive nurseries as places that provide care services and foster the healthy growth of children. This perspective offers insights into the community's view of nurseries, their services, and the rights, developmental requirements,

and educational opportunities for young children. The research was concentrated in the Korçë region, gathering data from a significant number of parents or families with children currently or previously in daycare. The research methodology employed in this study to collect information on parents' views of nurseries and their services combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data is gathered through parent questionnaires and focus groups. The data analysis suggests that parents in Korçë exhibit moderate satisfaction with nursery services. While they recognize that most aspects are indicative of service quality, they deem diversity and cultural competencies to be of lesser importance.

Abstrakt

Objektivi i këtij studimi është të eksplorojë se si prindërit ose kujdestarët i perceptojnë çerdhet dhe shërbimet që ato ofrojnë. Përfshirja dhe përkushtimi i prindërve në aktivitetet e çerdheve konsiderohen vendimtare për nxitjen e një marrëdhënieje pozitive midis familjeve dhe çerdheve dhe gjithashtu shihen si thelbësore për rritjen dhe sigurimin e cilësisë së shërbimeve të ofruara nga çerdhet. Për më tepër, prindërit i perceptojnë çerdhet si vende që ofrojnë shërbime përkujdesjeje dhe nxisin rritjen e shëndetshme të fëmijëve. Kjo perspektivë ofron njohuri mbi këndvështrimin e komunitetit për çerdhet, shërbimet e tyre dhe të drejtat, kërkesat zhvillimore dhe mundësitë arsimore për fëmijët e vegjël. Hulumtimi u përqendrua në qarkun e Korçës, duke mbledhur të dhëna nga një numër i

konsiderueshëm prindërisht ose familjesh me fëmijë aktualisht ose më parë në çerdhe. Metodologjia e kërkimit e përdorur në këtë studim për të mbledhur informacion mbi pikëpamjet e prindërve për çerdhet dhe shërbimet e tyre kombinon qasje sasiore dhe cilësore. Të dhënat mbledhen përmes pyetësorëve të prindërve dhe fokus grupeve. Analiza e të dhënave sugjeron që prindërit në Korçë shfaqin një kënaqësi të moderuar me shërbimet e çerdheve. Ndërsa ata pranojnë se shumica e aspekteve janë tregues të cilësisë së shërbimit, ata konsiderojnë se diversiteti dhe kompetencat kulturore janë të një rëndësie më të vogël.

Keywords: parents, perception, early childhood, education, care centre, quality

Introduction

Based on parents' perception of the aspects they consider most important of childcare services, we can draw out starting points for future projects on which to intervene with the aim of increasing collective awareness of the importance of childcare services. 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. Citing Bondioli (2002), quality 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).

It has even been suggested (Pence & Mccallum, 1994) that quality is not an objective reality but a relative value varying depending on the informant, who might be a parent, a child care worker, a policy-maker or even a child. Confusing good quality with good outcomes is a hazard in conceptualising quality of childcare. While quality of childcare is positively related to many aspects of children's ongoing development, it is also positively related to children's day to day happiness and security and to parents' satisfaction with child care.

Parents, on the other hand, are typically interested in evaluations that provide information about the quality of care and education their children are receiving. They may be interested in aspects such as the safety of the environment, the qualifications of the staff, the educational philosophy of the program, and the social and emotional development of their children. (Bruce, D., & Laurie, 1997)

To expand on the research, a study was conducted to examine parents'

opinion of the nursery services in the Korca region. Prior studies have looked at the quality of nursery services from various perspectives. The Department of Education at the University of Korca conducted a study two years ago to understand the viewpoints of educators in nursery schools in the city of Korca.

Methodology

This study combines quantitative and qualitative research methods to gain a thorough understanding of parents' perspectives on nurseries and the services they offer. The data is collected using parent questionnaires and focus groups, allowing for a detailed exploration of the various factors that influence parents' opinions and experiences. The questionnaires provide numerical data that can be analysed using statistical methods, while the focus groups allow for in-depth discussions and the exploration of more complex issues. Together, these methods offer a rich and nuanced picture of parents' perceptions and attitudes towards nurseries and their services. This study analyses the assessment that parents make of the various aspects of the nursery service such as: Accessibility, Center and Classroom environment, Teacher and Instruction, Curriculum, Family engagement, Diversity and Cultural competence. The parent survey was developed to measure parents' perspectives on quality early childhood care and education. The surveys ask participants to indicate the level of importance (1 as "not all important" to 3 as "very important") of six broad categories of structure- and process-based features of ECE programming when

choosing ECE programs for their children. (THai, 2018). The survey has been translated and adapted to Albanian and has undergone a pilot test with a group of parents whose children attend early child-care services. The translation and adaptation process was carried out with utmost care, ensuring that the survey is culturally appropriate and sensitive to the local context. In this phase, numerous linguistic adjustments were made to the questionnaire to ensure its high validity and reliability. In the literature, we can find several studies that have investigated the different variables that are intertwined with the different aspects that determine the perceived quality of nursery schools. Many studies of parents' view of child care quality have investigated the determinants of parent choice of child care, i.e. the factors influencing parents decision-making for non-maternal care and specific child care arrangements. A major issue discussed in these studies is whether parent choice of a particular type of care (centre-based, homebased, or provided by a relative) is due to family characteristics or to childcare quality features, such as the education and attitudes of caregivers, environment/equipment or programs. (Scopelliti & Musatti, 2013; Nguyen, Duncan, & Jenkins, 2019)

Other factors taken into consideration and studied in other research to understand which criteria are taken into account by families when choosing nursery services for children were: the cost of the service, location, hours and reliability, competence of teaching personnel and the level of contact between teachers and children. Cost to the consumer is often assumed to be the most important determinant of the type of care parents select, and the relative 'affordability' of one type

of child care compared with others is frequently mentioned by researchers, policy-makers and parents. However, in their review of research into child care choices, Pungello and Kurtz-Costes (2000) showed that relatively low price is only one of several extrinsic characteristics of which parents take account—location, hours and reliability often being equally important. Nevertheless, if cost is not the principal criterion for many parents, it remains a significant factor as data from a recent qualitative study in England show. (Leach, Barnes, Malmberg, Sylva, & Stein, 2006)

Canada and Bland (2014) established six key measures of high-performing ECE services evident to parents: ability of teachers, retention of teachers within the system or program, multicultural environment, expanded curricula, support for parental participation and involvement, and safety and protection within the ECE facility.

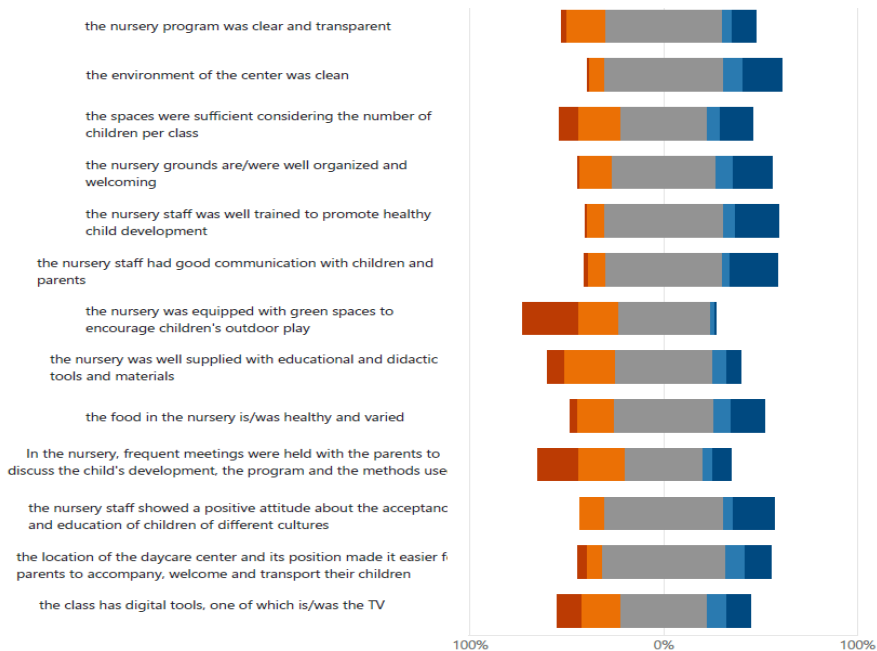
Bauchmuller et al. (2014) outlined another set of structural productivity indicators: the staff-child ratio, the number of male and female employees, the number of qualified staff, the percentage of ethnic minority staff, and the level of retention of staff.

As it was said above, this study focused on the assessment made by the parents, who had children in the daycare, about the aspects of Accessibility, Center and classroom environment, Teacher and Instruction, Curriculum, family engagement, diversity and cultural competence.

The participant in this study was 89 parents, 12 males and 77 females (one of the participants did not want to declare their gender), and 79 of the participants declared that they took at least one of their children to

the nursery. It is important to report that 71 of the participants who brought one of their children to nursery declared that both parents were involved in a working relationship during the period that the child attended nursery. While only 8 of the participants responded that one of the parents was not engaged in a working relationship.

Regarding the evaluation that parents made of nursery school services in a Likert scale of 5 points, (strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) we can see the following.

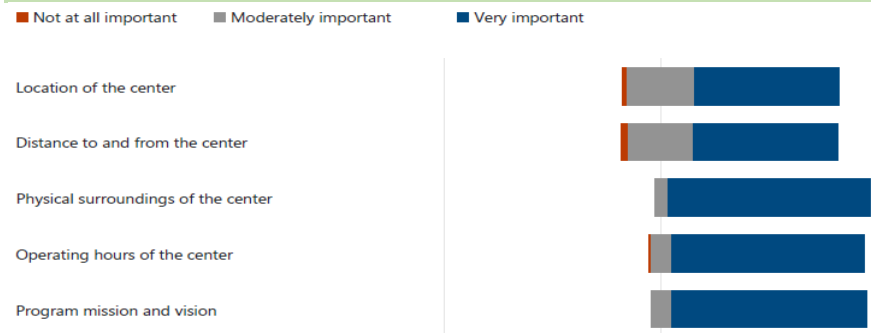


As we can see from the level of agreement and disagreement that parents present regarding the items reported in the graph, most parents report perceived shortcomings in the Korca nursery service. Thus it can be seen that there is a lack of green areas to promote outdoor activities for children, there is a lack of meetings between educators and parents organized by the service to discuss issues of children's development

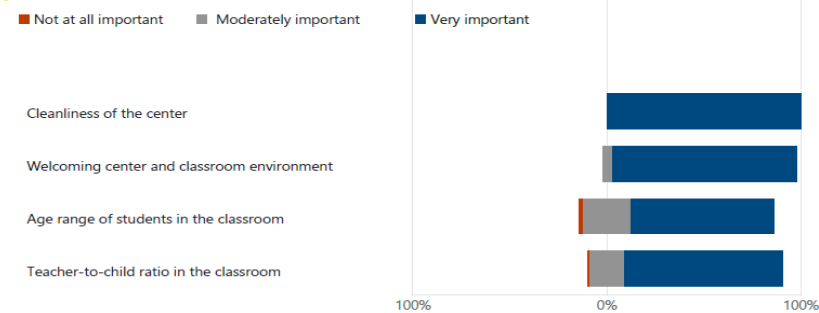
and progress, or on the program applied by the nursery. In general we see a trend of neutral evaluation which also allows us to understand the level of satisfaction of parents with the nursery service in Korca.

While regarding the importance that parents give to the various aspects of the nursery service, we can see that regarding the

Accessibility and operation

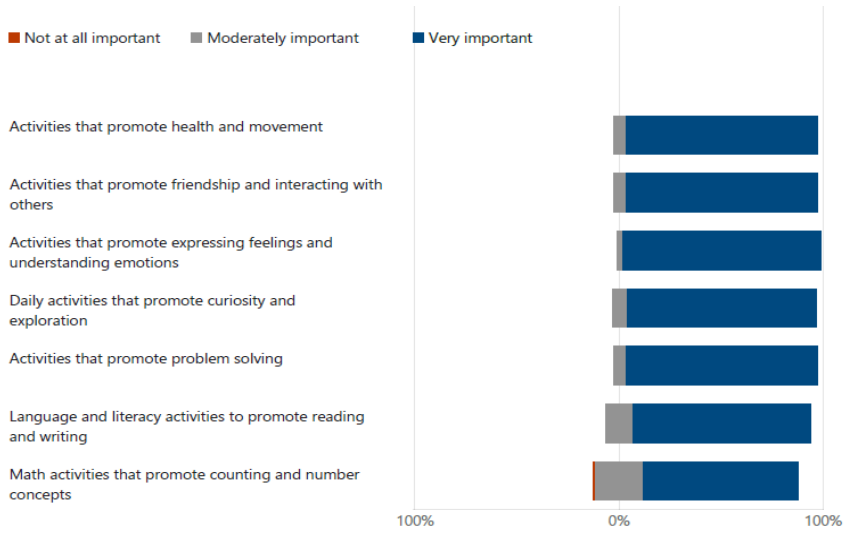


Center and Classroom Environment



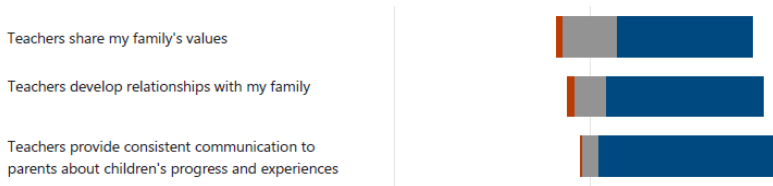
Curriculum

CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES



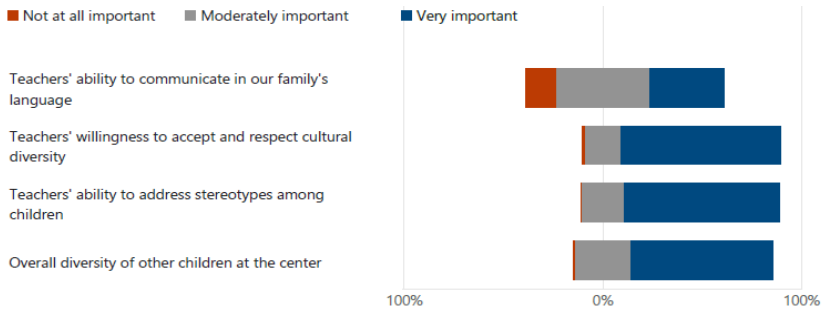
Family Engagement

Legend: ■ Not at all important ■ Moderately important ■ Very important



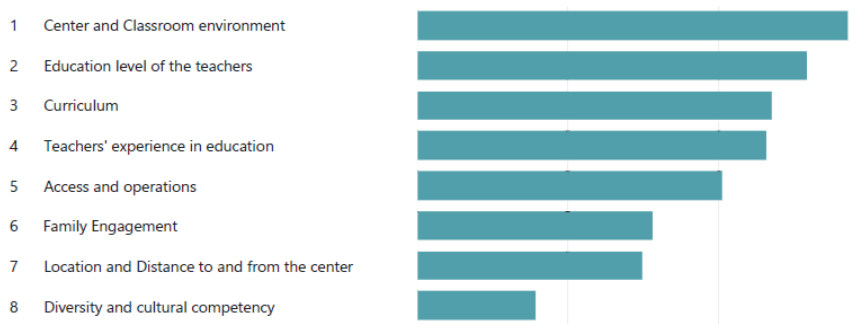
Diversity and cultural competency

Legend: ■ Not at all important ■ Moderately important ■ Very important



While if we look at the data collected on the classification of importance that parents make of the relevant aspects of nursery schools, we see that a small group of parents evaluates "teachers' ability to communicate in our family's language". as "not important" and the majority of parents evaluate it as "moderately important". This data probably leads us to think that in the nursery schools of Korca we do not have children who come from families who speak another language. However, this data needs to be verified.

Regarding the way in which parents classify, according to the level of importance, the aspects that characterize the nursery school service we can see that in first place they put Center and Classroom environment, in second place Education level of the Teachers and in third place , Curriculum. While parents rank Diversity and Cultural Competency in last place for importance.



The analysis of two focus groups, which included parents of children currently attending or who have attended nursery school, indicates that the relatives' satisfaction level is moderately high. The focus group sessions included a sample of 15 parents, with 7 participating in the first session and 8 in the second session. The group consisted of 15

females, comprising 13 mothers and two grandmothers of the children. The educational background of the participants was as follows: 13 individuals held a university degree, while only two possessed a high school diploma. When asked what they valued most about the nursery school service, the participants underscored both the service hours and its quality, with particular emphasis on the hygiene and attention the nursery's educators demonstrated towards the children. Data from the focus groups revealed that parental satisfaction correlated with the contentment of their children at the nursery. Regarding improvements to the nursery service, some parents pointed out the menu and food quality provided to the children, while a single mother mentioned the need for enhancing and better utilizing the nursery's green spaces. In response to the questions about the types of activities provided by the child-care service and how they were informed of the nursery's educational and pedagogical profile, nearly all focus group participants acknowledged their lack of awareness regarding any specific program or pedagogical profile employed by nursery schools for planning children's activities. Regarding the activities conducted in nursery schools, most parents in the focus groups generally described their children's activities, which mainly involved various common games. Additionally, an important piece of information emerged from the focus groups concerning parents' knowledge about the professional training of nursery school educators. The majority of parents merely assumed they had this information, believing that the educators possessed at least a university degree in preschool education sciences. The data from the survey and focus groups reveal that participants

consider the curriculum and teachers' educational level to be very important. However, the focus groups also highlight a lack of awareness among participants about the curriculum used in nursery schools and the educational qualifications of the nursery school teachers.

Conclusions

Data analysis indicates that parents' satisfaction with daycare services in Korçë is moderately low. Upon evaluating various quality indicators, most parents acknowledge their significance. Nonetheless, aspects such as diversity and cultural competence are deemed less critical by parents. The combined data from parent questionnaires and focus groups reveal that while parents believe they possess adequate information to assess nursery services, they often hold incorrect beliefs about the educators' level of education in nursery schools and are largely uninformed about the absence of a curriculum and the educational profile of the nursery school. Despite the limitations of this study, including the small sample size, the data collected can still provide valuable insights and serve as a catalyst for more comprehensive research on the subject.

References

- Bauchmüller, R., Gørtz, M., & Rasmussen, A. (2014). Long-run benefits from universal high-quality preschooling. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 29, 457-470.
- Bondioli, A. (2002). La qualità dei servizi per l'infanzia: una co-costruzione di significati condivisi. *Cittadini in crescita*, 48-62.
- Bruce, F., D., H. S., & Laurie, B. (1997). Evaluating child care and preschools: Advancing the interests of government, teachers, or parents? Dans B. Spodek, & O. N. Saracho, *Issues in Early Childhood Educational Assessment and Evaluation* (Vol. 7, pp. 7-27). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Canada, T. J., & Bland, K. E. (2014). *Parents of young children: Their perception of teacher quality and access to quality care*. Récupéré sur Western Connecticut State University.: http://www.wcgmf.org/pdf/publication_73.pdf
- Leach, P., Barnes, J., Malmberg, L.-E., Sylva, K., & Stein, A. (2006). The quality of different types of child care at 10 and 18 months: a comparison between types and factors related to quality. *Early Child Development and Care*, 1-33. doi:0.1080/03004430600722655
- Nguyen, T., Duncan, G. J., & Jenkins, J. M. (2019). Boosting School Readiness with Preschool. Dans A. J. Reynolds, & J. A. Temple, *Sustaining Early Childhood Learning Gains:*

Program, School, and Family Influences (pp. 74-131).
Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781108349352

Pence, A., & Mccallum, M. (1994). Developing Cross-Cultural Partnership: Implications for child care quality Research and practice. Dans P. Moss, & A. Pence, *Valuing Quality in Early Childhood Services: New Approaches to Defining Quality* (pp. 109-122). London; New York: Paul Chapman Publishing and Teachers College Press.

Pungello, E. P., & Kurtz-Costes, B. (2000). Working Women's Selection of Care for Their Infants: A Prospective Study. *Family Relation*, 49(3), 245-255.

Scopelliti, M., & Musatti, T. (2013). Parents' View of Child Care Quality: Values, Evaluations, and Satisfaction. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 22(8), 1025–1038. doi:10.1007/s10826-012-9664-3

THai, B. C. (2018). *An Evaluation of Early Childhood Education Programs: The Parents' Perspective of Quality Care*. doi:<https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.vubk-s55s>

VOCABULARY AND EARLY LANGUAGE ACQUISITION
LEKSIKU DHE MËSIMI I HERSHËM I GJUHËS

Elizabeta BANDILOVSKA

St. Kliment Ohridski Faculty of Pedagogy

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University Skopje, Republic of North
Macedonia

elizabeta.bandilovska@gmail.com

Lulzim ADEMI

St. Kliment Ohridski Faculty of Pedagogy

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University Skopje, Republic of North
Macedonia

ademilulzim@yahoo.com

Jasmina JOVANOVSKA

St. Kliment Ohridski Faculty of Pedagogy

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University Skopje, Republic of North
Macedonia

jasmina.armenska@gmail.com

Abstract

Every language has its own vocabulary and a basic lexical corpus understood and used by the native speakers, regardless of their age and the type of language communication. This corpus represents the lexical basis of the language and generally includes smaller number of lexemes regarding to the entire lexical corpus. At the same time, the basic lexical corpus connects the contemporary with historical state of the language on a lexical level. As an integral part of the language, the vocabulary undergoes the biggest changes, usually in direction of actualization of the new, foreign lexemes, or archaization of the domestic ones, mostly those from the basic lexical corpus. Several factors play a significant role in this process, such as: the media influence, the literature influence (domestic and foreign), the (non)compliance with the standard language norm, the language of the environment, etc. This paper is focused on investigating how young speakers acquire the basic lexical corpus. More precisely, it is analyzed how deeply the new society, the foreign languages and digitalization affect young speakers' language acquisition in direction of understanding and applying the language basic lexical corpus. This is performed using the knowledge from our everyday teaching practice, and the performed analysis is comparative with examples from two different languages, Macedonian and Albanian.

Keywords: communication, language, language norm, teaching practice, vocabulary.

Abstrakt

Çdo gjuhë ka leksikon e saj dhe fondin e vet bazë leksikor që kuptohet dhe përdoret nga të gjithë folësit e saj, pavarësisht nga mosha dhe lloji i komunikimit gjuhësor. Ai përfaqëson bazën leksikore të gjuhës dhe, si rregull, përmban një numër më të vogël leksemash në raport me të gjithë fondin leksikor. Në të njëjtën kohë, fondi leksikor bazë paraqet fillin që lidh gjendjen bashkëkohore me atë historike të gjuhës në rrafshin leksikor. Si pjesë përbërëse e gjuhës, leksiku pëson ndryshimet më të mëdha, të cilat shpeshherë lëvizin në drejtim të aktualizimit të leksemave të reja, të huaja apo të arkaizimit të leksemave vendase, më së shumti ato të fondit bazë leksikor. Në këtë proces luajnë një rol të rëndësishëm disa faktorë si: ndikimi i medias, ndikimi i letërsisë (vendase dhe të huaj), (mos)përputhja me normën gjuhësore standarde, gjuha e mjedisit etj. Në këtë punim do të përqendrojmë vëmendjen tonë në adoptimin e fondit bazë leksikor nga përdoruesit e rinj të gjuhës, d.m.th. sa dhe si ndikon realiteti i ri shoqëror, ndikimi i gjuhëve të huaja dhe dixhitalizimi në (më herët dhe më vonë.) formimin gjuhësor në drejtim të marrjes, njohjes dhe zbatimit të fondit leksikor bazë të gjuhës. Për këtë ne përdorim njohuritë nga praktika jonë mësimore dhe analiza e bërë është krahasuese, me shembuj nga fondi i gjuhës maqedonase dhe shqipe.

Fjalë kyçe: gjuhë, leksiku, komunikim, normë gjuhësore, praktikë mësimore.

Introduction

Every language has its own vocabulary and a basic lexical corpus understood and used by the native speakers, regardless of their age and the type of language communication. This corpus represents the lexical basis of the language and generally includes smaller number of lexemes regarding to the entire lexical corpus. At the same time, the basic lexical corpus connects the contemporary with historical state of the language on a lexical level. As an integral part of the language, the vocabulary undergoes the biggest changes, usually in direction of actualization of the new, foreign lexemes, or archaization of the domestic ones, mostly those from the basic lexical corpus. Several factors play a significant role in this process, such as: the media influence, the literature influence (domestic and foreign), the (non)compliance with the standard language norm, the language of the environment, etc. Therefore, the attention in this paper is focused on investigating:

1. How young speakers acquire the basic lexical corpus? More precisely, how and to what extent the new social reality, the foreign language influence and the process of digitalization affect young users' language development in direction of

introducing, understanding, and applying the basic lexical corpus?

2. To what extent is the (lack of) knowledge of the basic lexical corpus of young language users present? Nowadays, that (lack of) knowledge is moving towards the border of archaization of number of domestic words that are closely related to out folk tradition, and the creative work in general.

To elaborate the above-mentioned research questions, the knowledge of our language and everyday teaching practice were considered. In addition, a comparative analysis of two languages is performed: Macedonian and Albanian.

The importance of lexical corpus knowledge

The rich lexical corpus of Macedonian and Albanian language is presented in multi-generational creative opus of Macedonian and Albanian authors. Its analysis reveals all the temporal and spatial attributes of the folk wisdom, the culture and the tradition which are closely intertwined and purposely reflected in authors' contemporary expression. Those attributes must be preserved and incorporated in the code of modern person as a creative echo of the writer and his/her time (Bandilovska, 2020, p. 223). The rich lexical corpus is also presented in translations of the world's famous literary works that bring closer to us the world, foreign and different from ours, and make it somehow familiar incorporating selected words from the domestic lexis. In that

wealth of authors and literary works (foreign and domestic), the most important is the selection of words from the lexis, especially when it comes to children's language and literature.

Language and teaching practice

Unfortunately, the language and teaching practice have showed the following behaviors of young speakers (especially students) of Macedonian/Albanian language during the past several years:

- They understand and use the domestic words less and focus on foreign (international) words in their everyday conversations.
- They promote archaization of number of words from the basic lexical corpus.

Among the main reasons for the above-mentioned behaviors are the rapid development of the society and globalization as a significant and dynamic process in the modern world. Another important reason is the lost interest of young speakers for reading book. A significant part of children and students doesn't have a desire and habit for reading books. Living in a digital age, they consider the process of reading books useless and boring. This perception stems from our teaching practice where we notice their inability to interpret a specific group of words, such as: *божилак/vijakuqe* (rainbow), *воденица/mulli* (mill), *суница/vijakuqe* (rainbow), *семе/akullohet* (to freeze), *жезол/skeptër* (sceptre), *леска* (common hazel), *полјана/kullotë* (meadow), *страк/kërcell* (stem), *џбун/shkurre* (bush) и др.

Knowledge of the lexis as an asset for language expression

Even though the colloquial language is relegated to the margins of the lexical corpus (consciously or not), it represents a significant literature aspect, connecting the past and the present. The presence of archaisms, dialectisms and words from Turkish origin is obvious in many works of our contemporary authors, as well as in modern dialectal expressions of Macedonian/Albanian speakers. The lexical diversity is evident if different environments are observed, especially urban and rural areas. All these perceptions have their own influence in construction of language expressions and the usage of certain lexis. However, the less known and infrequently used words should not be avoided. The knowledge of archaisms, dialectisms and words from Turkish origin enriches our language expression and individual lexis, contributes to more stylish expression of our creative and narrative thoughts, and gives them a specific authenticity (Spasevski, 1997). Examples of such words are the following: *амбар/hambar* (granary), *арамија/hajdut* (robber), *арен/* (good), *бојаџија/bojaxhi* (dyer), *бунар/bunar* (well), *зајда/gajde* (bagpipe), *гумно/* (threshing floor), *долан/dollap* (cabinet), *долче/luginë* (diminutive form of valley), *жилка/gilcë* (blood vessel), *зандана/birucë* (dungeon), *канела/faltore* (chapel), *конак/konak* (inn), *коприна/* (silk), *коруја/kori* (woods), *лиџба/* (beauty), *мангал/mangall* (brazier), *мандра/* (sheepfold), *мегдан/mejdan* (battlefield), *налани/nallane* (clogs), *одаја/odë* (chamber), *оскоруша/vadhë* (service tree), *покрив/* (cover),

пре́д/tyerr (yarn), *рогозина/rrogoz* (straw mat), *самар/samar* (saddle), *сокак/sokak* (lane), *со́фpa/sofër* (dinning table), *ма́йфа/tajfë* (group), *тра́н/* (hole), *ча́рдак/çardak* (oriel) и др.

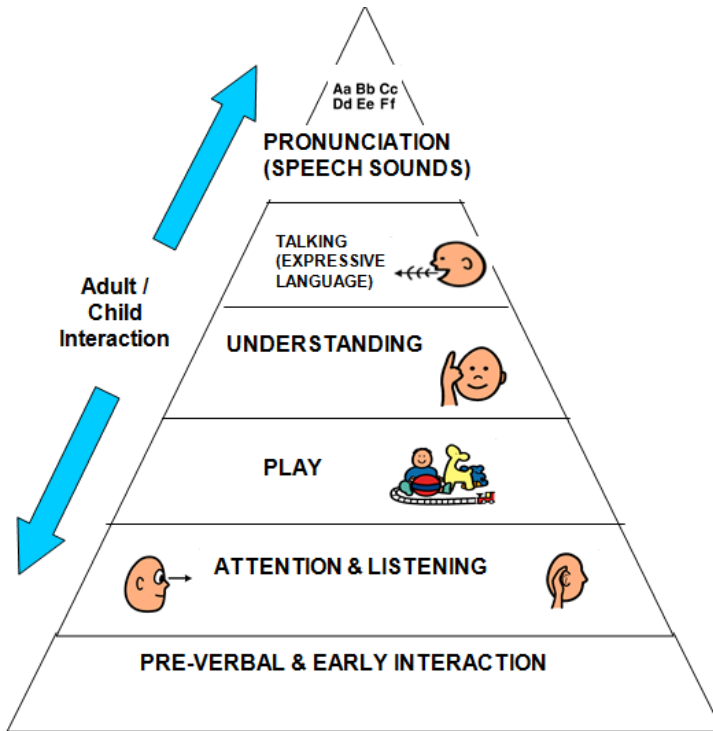


Figure 1. Communication development pyramid¹⁵

Early language acquisition

When it comes to early language acquisition, the assessment of

¹⁵ <https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/what-we-do/children-young-people-health-services-cambridgeshire/specialist-services/childrens-speech-and-language-therapy/activities-ideas-and-info/child-development-ages-and-stages>

lexical development concerning children from preschools and primary schools (first to fifth grade) is performed through several phases (Figure 1):

1. How children build a vocabulary?
2. How children assign meanings to words?
3. How these meanings change in response to various experiences?

Understanding the meaning of particular words, concerning children, is closely related to speech understanding and development, as well as the **rhyme** recognition and production. This process is characteristic for preschool children when the awareness of the rhyme existence and its understanding gives children opportunities to build creative expressions (Gligorović, Buha & Dobrota-Davidović, 2018, p. 16) Hence, in their spontaneous language expressions, the following phrases could be frequently found:

- Ана-банана (Anna-banana),
- прв-црв (first-worm),
- втор-мотор (second-motor),
- тон-слон (ton-elephant),
- вода-мода (water-fashion),
- гума-шума (rubber-forest),
- врата-палата (door-palace), итн.
- вода-дода (water)

- **патики**-тики (sneakers)
- **чорапи**-рапи (socks)



Figure 2. English rhyming word

Play-based activities are the most effective and natural way to stimulate children’s language development. By weaving playful experiences into reading and writing, educators can create an engaging and interactive environment suitable for every child.

4. Development of language skills

Around the fifth year, children have already acquired their mother language. The following phase is specified by frequent communication and development of numerous language skills. Concerning the lexical development, the intuitive thinking processes emerge which are characterized by:

- children's creativity and change in interpretation of words' meaning,
- emergence of lexical innovations (штркови for Штрумфови - storks for Smurfs),
- naming analogy: балерина/balerinë (ballerina) – балерин/balerin (балерин should be балетан (male ballet dancer)), слугинка/shërbëtoe (female servant) – слугин/shërbëtor (слугин should be слуга (male servant)),
- neologisms: кокобед for сончоглед (sunflower), кепач for кечап (ketchup), меме for млеко (milk), пажгети for спагети (spaghetti), цициче for лажиче (teaspoon),
- generalization (eggshell and tangerine peel), and
- restriction of terms from the environment (for example, the term tree is used for all types of trees in the nature).

The lexical richness in spontaneous speech is not only measured by the number of words used. The most important is the possibility of words' appropriate usage when people express their thoughts and feelings. Therefore, studying children's lexical development could not be reduced to simple words counting that children use in their language expression. Furthermore, children's language development associated with the meaning of the words should be observed. The most common relationship between the words, such as polysemy, synonymy, antonymy and homonymy, is of great importance. Children use them in their expressions in a slightly different way than adults (Bandilovska,

2016). The following pairs are frequently used synonyms:

- *силен – голем/i fortë – i madh* (strong - brave),
- *мрак – ноќ/errësirë – natë* (darkness - night),
- *лош – неумен/i keq – mendjehollë* (bad – harmful).

Examples of antonymies typical for children are:

- *кратко – долго/e shkurtë – e gjatë* (short – long),
- *мазно – рапаво/e lëmuar – e ashpër* (smooth – rough),
- *меко – тврдо/e butë – e fortë* (soft – firm),
- *мало – големо/e vogël – madhe* (small – big);
- *блиску – далеку/afër – larg* (near – far),
- *лево – десно/majtas – djathtas* (left – right),
- *горе – долу/lartë – poshtë* (up – down);
- *расте – се смалува/rritet – zvogëlohet* (grow – shrink),
- *се доближува – се оддалечува/afrohet – largohet* (get closer – moving away),
- *сака – не сака/do – nuk do* (like – don't like).

The use of metaphorical meaning is also notable in children's expressions, such as: *зелена ливада* (green meadow) – *зелени јаготки* (green strawberries)/*livadh i gjelbër – dredhëza të gjelbra*; *златен прстен* (gold ring) – *златни рипки* (goldfish)/*send i artë – peshq të artë*.

4.1 Frequent use of foreign words among children

In context of children's lexical development, and language acquisition in general, a frequent use of foreign words is notable. The main reason for such language behavior is adults' speaking influence, as well as children's media exposure which increases over the years. A major factor affecting language development is exposure to media content. Carefully selected, in accordance with children's age, media content could be stimulative and productive. Additionally, media exposure should be time-limited and monitored by adults who will interpret the sent message, explain the unknown words, and observe children's experience. Unfortunately, all these conditions are rarely carried out when children engage with the modern technical and technological achievements, such as mobile phones, tablets, and computers (Blazhevaska-Chaushoska, 2021, p. 68-69). Hence, the large surge and easy penetration of foreign words (mostly English) in children's language expression is evident, which is crucial for their most sensitive and critical period of language development. Some of the English words observed in expressions appearing in children's shows and songs are the following: *лајв* (*life*), *селфи* (*selfie*), *аут* (*out*), *бенд* (*band*), *кул* (*cool*), *сурфа* (*surf*), *лајк* (*like*), *нет* (*net*) и сл. The number of foreign words in children's vocabulary is large, such as the number of words from the dialects and the colloquial language. The factors that influence such behavior could be seek in:

- the communicative actuality of the terms,

- the consideration that such words are expressions of “prestige” or perhaps “they simply sound more attractive”,
- the lack of suitable domestic word,
- the influence of parents and teachers from pre-schools and primary schools, as the most important factor in language acquisition and speech model for the children.

Baring all this in mind, children’s lexical development should be permanently fostered through rich language interactions and reading books. Another coping tool for solving above-mentioned perceptions is the actualization of language games that improves the process of words’ analysis and synthesis. Playing language games enables children to reveal words’ structure and semantics.

Conclusion

Despite the significant importance of the standard language norm and everything that the lexis entails in the communication with children, it should be emphasized that language acquisition must correspond to children’s age and their development potentialities. Therefore, in the process of selecting lexis suitable for children, the focus should be on the content and the methodology in accordance with children’s needs and interests, the foreign words and expressions should be avoided, the children’s love of the mother tongue should be cultivated, and its word formation potential should be used to name new, unknown terms. At the same time, it is necessary to constantly

disclose and eliminate the errors and omissions occurring in children's language development, especially in a position of educators as significant factors in pre-schools' and primary schools' educational processes.

6. References

- Bandilovska-Ralповska, E. 2016. *Paradigmatskite odnosi kaj opisnite pridavki vo makedonskiot jazik*, IMJ "Krstе Misirkov", Skopje.
- Bandilovska, E. 2020. *Leksichki pogledi za jazikot*. Skopje.
- Blazhevсka-Chaushoska, S. 2021. *Lingvistichki osvrt kon jazikot vo ranata detska vozrast*. Skopje (magisterski trud).
- Gligorović, M., Buha, N., Dobrota-Davidović, N. "Razumevanja govora kod dece od šest do devet godina", *Specijalna edukacija i rehabilitacija*, Vol. 17, br. 1, 9-31.
- Spasevski, M. 1997. "Literaturata za deca i vlijanieto na narodnata poetika vrz nejzinite stilsko-izrazni sredstva", *Stremezh*, Skopje.
- Tolkoven rechnik na makedonskiot jazik 1-6*. 2003 – 2014, IMJ "Krstе Misirkov", Skopje.

ASPECTS OF DIDACTIC MEDIATION MODELS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AGED 0-3 YEARS

Evjonda PYLLI

Lecturer, Department of Education

University “Fan S. Noli” of Korçë, Albania

epylli@unkorce.edu.al

Abstract

Studies on education issues, in the field of psychology and its sub-branches such as developmental psychology, psychology and education, etc., have emphasised and continue to emphasise the need for children's education from an early age. This is because the first years of every person's life, regardless of race, gender, or ethnicity, are essential in shaping them as future citizens as the foundations of habits are created and role models that remain theirs throughout life.

So how children are provided with new information, the motivation of adults and the characteristics of their surroundings become determinants of their experiences of the world, as active discoverers rather than passive recipients of everything that surrounds them.

Keywords: Didactic mediation; cognitive development; early age;

surrounding environment.

Abstrakt

Studimet për çështjet e arsimit, në fushën e psikologjisë dhe nëndegët e saj si psikologjia e zhvillimit, psikologjia dhe edukimi etj., kanë theksuar dhe vazhdojnë të theksojnë nevojën e edukimit të fëmijëve që në moshë të vogël. Kjo për shkak se vitet e para të jetës së çdo personi, pavarësisht nga raca, gjinia apo përkatësia etnike, janë thelbësore në formimin e tyre si qytetarë të ardhshëm, pasi krijohen bazat e zakoneve dhe modelet që mbeten të tyre gjatë gjithë jetës.

Pra, mënyra sesi fëmijëve u jepen informacione të reja, motivimi i të rriturve dhe karakteristikat e rrethinës së fëmijës bëhen përcaktues të përvojave të tyre të botës, si zbulues aktivë dhe jo si marrës pasivë të gjithçkaje që i rrethon.

Fjalët kyç: ndërmjetësimi didaktik, zhvillimi konjitiv, mosha e hershme, mjedisi rrethues

Didactic patterns, fundamentals and conditionalities that determine learning in children aged 0-3 years.

The necessity for early education is definitely related to social changes or developments in its specific fields. Moreover, in essence, it is related to nature and the constant need of human to adapt to the “world” and

to prepare to interact more and more with the surrounding environment, of course without excluding the changes that this environment offers. Thus, (Piaget, 1957); (Bruner, 1960); (Vygotsky, 1978) through their studies have pointed out that the cognitive, emotional and social development of children is seen as unbound from the context of the influence of the surrounding environment, despite similar characteristics and related stages in which children go through the entire process of their growth and development.

As a result, the first years of life are critical for healthy early childhood development. As with physical development, cognitive, social and emotional moments represent important steps forward in a child's development (Child Abuse Prevention, 2023)

Bruner, the contributor with the greatest influence on human cognitive psychology as well as cognitive learning theory, has pointed out that due to such characteristics of children as being curious, active. etc., from an early age they try to organize the world in increasingly complex ways (Bruner, 1960). Of course, this complexity is inevitably linked to the surrounding environment, but Bruner plays a crucial role in the organization of new information and consequently requires adult intervention (mainly by the ducators).

Likewise, Paiget's ideas about children's learning at an early age go hand in hand with Bruner's ideas about similar characteristics of children that come from human nature. Moreover, through the four known stages of cognitive development it presents the main characteristics that children are expected to exhibit within the respective time frames:

- Sensomotor stage (birth, up to 2 years)
- Preoperative stage (2-7 years old)
- Concrete operational stage (7-12 years old)
- Stage of formal operational thinking (12 years and older) (Piaget, 1957)

Also, Piaget adds that in the multitude of general characteristics of children we can distinguish their specific qualities which will be decisive in the ways of acquiring any new information. Here, Piaget assesses as essential the importance of the four basic principles such as:

- The child's willingness to "accept" new information;
- Motivation from the educator in order to encourage cognitive activity;
- Determining the child's level of achievement with the new information;
- Keeping in mind the characteristics associated with the level of intelligence of the child;
- The quality of the child's attachment to the mother, etc

These principles will constitute the basic elements of children's exploration of the world in order to create creative, critical and revelatory individuals.

On the other hand, adults, including parents, educators, heads of nursery services institutions, etc., should be fully aware of the child's developmental characteristics: namely physical development and

development of thinking skills. “In general, we judge a child's development by his weight and height at a certain age, by the right proportion between different parts of the body, by the size of the circle of the head, chest, abdomen, and teething. These data give us the opportunity to judge on physical development, on the development of the child's body according to his age” (Albania, 2020, p. 14) .

It seems that Piaget focuses attention precisely on the basics and the concrete ways in which children acquire knowledge through the creation of relationships with others, the relationship and manipulation of numbers, and the way in which they understand cause-and-effect relationships.etc., (Piaget, 1952).

Likewise, the development of rational thinking of children cannot be seen as detached from their Albanian (physical) experiences, as it is one of the greatest achievements of thinking, which culminates in abstracting skills (Same Reference).

While we highlight the opportunities for children at an early age to discover and develop their potential, we cannot help but highlight the role of adults and the surrounding environment as the most influential factors in the process.

Likewise, the surrounding environment, together with its characteristics and content (respective spaces related to children's activities), play an important role in motivating children and encouraging them towards discovery, in addition to developing their respective competencies.

The dimensions, spacing and content of the concrete spaces in which children 0-3 years old will conduct various activities, must be pre-

determined and in accordance with their characteristics and practical activities. Here we refer to nursery environments, an environment in which children are expected to have the opportunity to provide and guarantee health and social care.

Studies have shown that there are several factors that have a direct and immediate impact on the quality of learning in children 0-3 years old.

Moreover, researchers refute that such factors as:

- Features of the space;
- Work organization with kids
- Professionalism and education;
- Adapting learning styles;
- Systematic reporting with parents, etc., become easily manageable due to their structuring (Garaldini, 2022).

Likewise, the creation of the above criteria and the implementation of efficient didactic models will create favorable conditions in order to fully develop their potential and contribute to the creation of worthy citizens of tomorrow.

The stimulating environment for early learning promotes the development of children's skills at an early age through the promotion of creative and critical thinking and self-awareness of the existence of multiculturalism. Same Reference (Garaldini, 2022). Moreover, the learning process of children at the age of 0-3 years can not be seen as disconnected either by factors such as:

- ✚ Opportunities for access to environments where educational services are provided

- ✚ Ensuring the provision of educational services in kindergarten for all children 0-3 years old, despite the economic impossibilities of family members;
- ✚ Determination of physical development skills in accordance with the age of the child;
- ✚ Children's relationship with their mother during the first year of life;
- ✚ Taking into account the temperament of the child and the individual characteristics of the children;
- ✚ Level of cooperation with parents;
- ✚ Characteristics of the age of children 0-3 years and the determination of their abilities and expectations in accordance with it.
- ✚ Taking into account the concept “involving children in activities where play is at the center”.etc.

Due to the influence of the above factors, creating a solid and effective foundation for each child in order to learn shows its challenges in implementation.

However, studies have shown that despite the changes that characterize them, children have the opportunity to be involved in learning processes in educational service settings, such as kindergartens.

Didactic patterns, approaches and learning perspectives of children aged 0-3 years.

Among the most popular and successful methods so far in terms of nursery service is the observation method. We find the importance and role of observation for early childhood reflected in the method of Maria Montessori which emphasizes the role of systematic, uninterrupted observation with a positive approach to what may not appear interesting but in fact useful in assessing a child's 0-3 year old behavior, (Montesori, 2007).

These elements combined with the ability to choose, the independence of the child to move, the freedom to manipulate materials, etc., will positively affect the preparation of children for learning (Same Reference). Also because according to Montessori and many other researchers, 0-3 years is the most appropriate age to provide the basis for learning in other years of life. This coincides with the so-called “first plan” according to Montessori, which takes place in the early years of the child's life.

The didactic models here will highlight two fundamental aspects of children's education: the effectiveness of child-centered methods and their specific ways, or the need for intervention and improvement of these methods, where the child will be at the center of learning, with a view to gradual acquisition of knowledge.

Other authors have referred to other concerns regarding the method of observation. Thus, Fabbri, includes two essential elements in this process related to the professionalism of the Observer, which in this case is the researcher, the educator and to the latter's tendency to include the element of subjectivity.

However, over the years, many psychologists, educators and various

researchers through their research have tended to use specific techniques, suffusing with assessments related to the latter. Moreover, they have increased the need for cooperation with parents, as educators alone in the observation process will not be able to include everything they see and observe in the nursery settings.

Moreover, there are studies that refer to the cooperation of children between the ages of 0-3 with parents is essential in revealing the full capacity of children to learn. Thus, if parents read to their children while they are at home, stories, stories or various materials, certain parts of the brain begin to activate and remain so throughout life (Siegel & Bryson, 2012).

In fact, reading books aloud to young children proves to be the most effective way to inspire a love of books in general and to create rich language environments. This is because reading aloud supports language development and future literacy skills.

References

- Albania, W . V. (2020). *Manual për edukatorët*: World Vision Albania, Tiranë.
- Bruner, J. (1960). *The Process of Education*. Cambridge, Massachusetts : Harvard University Press.
- Child Abuse Prevention, T. &. (2023). *Why the 5 years of child development are so important*. Corporate and Foundation Partners: <https://www.all4kids.org/news/blog/why-the-first-5-years-of-child-development-are-so-important>.

- Garaldini, A. L. (2022). *Crescere al nido: Gli spazi, i tempi, le attività, le relazioni*. Bologna, Italy: Tascabili Faber.
- Kai-leéBerke, T. s. (2014). *The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & Twos*. Columbus,: Teaching Strategies, LLC.Ohio.
- Montessori, M. (2007). *Early Childhood Programs: Applying Theories to Practice. Early Childhood Education Today*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Perocchini, L. C. (2004). *L' osservazione del bambino nel contesto educativo*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Piaget, J. (1952). *The origins of intelligence in children*. New York: International Universities Press.
- Piaget, J. (1957). *Construction of reality in the child*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Siegel, D. J., & Bryson, T. P. (2012). *The whole brain child*. New York, USA: Bantam Book.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. . Cambridge, MA: Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

THE INFLUENCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS ON THE MOTOR DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN IN THE AGE GROUP OF 3-6 YEARS.

Viola DOLANI

Lecturer, Department of Social Sciences
University “Fan S. Noli” of Korçë, Albania
vd30489@seeu.edu.mk

Mariela BURDA

Lecturer, Department of Education
University “Fan S. Noli” of Korçë, Albania
elaburda@yahoo.com

Abstract

Two factors influence the motor development process in children: genetic potential and environmental factors. The development of motor skills during infancy and childhood depends on and is influenced by morphological, physiological and neuromuscular characteristics, on the one hand and on the other hand motor development occurs in a specific social context, the environment in which a child grows up is important. Each social context has specific characteristics for children's motor skills and physical activities. The society in which the child

lives; the school environment he/she attends; quality of living conditions; family size (number of brothers and sisters) interactions between brothers and sisters and general socioeconomic circumstances are potentially important factors to be considered.

The purpose of this study focuses on the analysis of the main environmental factors that influence motor development. Referring to previous studies, socio-economic status, parents' educational level as well as the degree of communication between preschool education institutions and parents can affect children's motor skills.

Preschool education institutions represent one of the most important actors that influence the motor development of children, due to the large amount of time that children spend in them nowadays. In addition, the social and cultural context in which a child grows up forms certain demands on his/her motor behavior, favoring particular aspects of motor development and impairing others. The study will focus on identifying the role of family status in the perception and expectations of parents on the role of preschool education institutions playing in the child's motor and social development.

Keywords: children; motor development; motor skills; communication; institutions of pre-university education; socio-economic status

Abstrakt

Dy faktorë ndikojnë në procesin e zhvillimit motorik të fëmijët: potenciali gjenetik dhe faktorët mjedisorë. Zhvillimi i aftësive motorike gjatë foshnjërisë dhe fëmijërisë varet dhe ndikohet nga karakteristikat morfologjike, fiziologjike dhe neuromuskulare, nga njëra anë dhe nga ana tjetër zhvillimi motorik ndodh në një kontekst specifik social, kështu që mjedisi në të cilin rritet fëmija është e rëndësishme. Çdo kontekst social ka karakteristika specifike për aftësitë motorike dhe aktivitetet fizike të fëmijëve. shoqëria në të cilën jeton fëmija; mjedisi shkollor që ai/ajo ndjek, cilësia e kushteve të jetesës, madhësia e familjes (numri i vëllezërve dhe motrave) ndërveprimet ndërmjet vëllezërve dhe motrave dhe rrethanat e përgjithshme socio-ekonomike janë faktorë potencialisht të rëndësishëm që duhen marrë parasysh.

Qëllimi i këtij studimi fokusohet në analizën e faktorëve kryesorë mjedisorë që ndikojnë në zhvillimin motorik. Referuar studimeve të mëparshme, gjendja socio-ekonomike, niveli arsimor i prindërve si dhe shkalla e komunikimit ndërmjet institucioneve të arsimit parashkollor dhe prindërve mund të ndikojnë në aftësitë motorike të fëmijëve.

Institucionet e arsimit parashkollor përfaqësojnë një nga aktorët më të rëndësishëm që ndikojnë në zhvillimin motorik të fëmijëve, për shkak të kohës së madhe që fëmijët kalojnë në to në ditët e sotme. Përveç kësaj, konteksti social dhe kulturor në të cilin rritet një fëmijë formon kërkesa të caktuara për sjelljen e tij/saj motorike, duke favorizuar aspekte të veçanta të zhvillimit motorik dhe duke dëmtuar të tjerët. Studimi do të fokusohet në identifikimin e rolit të statusit familjar në

perceptimin dhe pritshmëritë e prindërve mbi rolin e institucioneve të edukimit parashkollor që luajnë në zhvillimin motorik dhe social të fëmijës.

Fjalë kyçe: fëmijë; zhvillimi motorik; aftësitë motorike; komunikimi; institucionet e arsimit parauniversitar; statusi social-ekonomik

Introduction

Early childhood is an important period in every child's life. Studies have shown that children's preparation for primary school begins much earlier. In fact, this preparation begins at birth and lasts throughout early childhood. Early stimulations and interventions are very important and irreplaceable in children and their effect is strongly reflected in later periods of development. On the other hand, all children have the potential to achieve most of the standards for a given age, of course with appropriate stimulation, encouragement, support and guidance. In other words, for a child to grow and develop he needs not only protection, food and health care, but also interaction, stimulation, safety, love and learning process through exploring the environment in which he grows.

Early childhood development is a multidimensional concept that covers the early childhood period from before birth to 6 years and includes a series of coordinated services for young children and families. From the rights perspective, within the framework of the Convention on the

Rights of the Child, early childhood development considers the fulfillment of children's rights to survival, development, participation, and protection (Britto, Ravens & Ponguta, 2011). At this time, children learn to take care of themselves more. Likewise, children further develop the concept of themselves, of gender identity and gender roles, as well as a series of habits related to the beginning of school: recognition of numbers, letters, sounds, etc. (Karaj, 2005).

The idea that all children should be educated, and that literacy is a critical and important process was first presented by Martin Luther (1483-1546), who therefore proposed that monasteries be converted into schools. In his view, parents were the first and most important teachers of children, but he believed that the community also played a critical role in their early education (Olson, 2012).

John Amos Comenius (1592 - 1670) was also in the group of pioneers contributing to the development of early education, supporting the education in the early years of children to fulfill the image or value of man. He promoted the idea that children have a timeline for growth and learning and that knowledge is presented based on their readiness. He singled out special forms for the realization of adequate learning, emphasizing that the lesson should be one day and that the pictures in the books offer children opportunities to teach them the names and concepts of objects (Morrison, 1988; Pelzman, 1998).

According to the view of John Locke (1632-1704), known throughout history for his contribution to the field of education, the environment determines the development of the child and who he will become. According to him, children are "blank lists" (tabula rasa), which are

filled with knowledge from the environment. Locke also considered that the quality of the environment affects the quality of learning and development of children. He promoted the idea that early education is a means to compensate for an old environment, emphasizing the role of activities and the adequate creation of the environment, with the aim of achieving children's success in school.

He also contributed to the promotion of the idea that the creation of a well-developed sensory environment is essential for the proper education of children (Morrison, 1988, Donahoe, 2001).

The methodology used in this study is the realization of semi-structured interviews with representatives of pre-university education institutions in the municipality of Korca, and representatives from the community of parents. The purpose of these interviews is related to the identification of the role and importance of cooperation between parents and representatives of pre-university education institutions.

The role and importance of the family in the early education

Every child comes into this world equipped with certain abilities and the family plays an important role in their development. The best time to educate the child is the childhood years, when most of the character is formed. The best place is the family, and the best educators are mother and father. The family is where communication and social development begin. Along with social development, language is learned and the transmission of moral rules and traditional values to the next generation. These are realized only in a healthy family. Children

raised and educated in an environment where parents live together and adapt to each other take their place in society as independent individuals. In a study conducted on young prisoners, it was noticed that 70% of them come from separated families, who grew up separated for different reasons. Based on this conclusion, we can say that the harmonious coexistence of parents and the support of the family on sound foundations enables the child to grow up in the most ideal way and gain the desired behaviors (Menderes, 2005: 135).

Of course, the surrounding environment also plays a very important role in reflecting the moral values of the child. The child needs a model of an educated and informed mother and father in order to realize a healthy development. Before the child reaches the period of defining values, he consciously accepts the behaviors and explanations of his parents. The educational level of the parents is important in determining the moral values of the child that will develop later. Therefore, their educational level must be sufficient to realize this (Acuner, 2004: 110).

The social, economic and cultural features of the family are very important factors that affect the physical and social development of the child. Factors such as the religion of the mother and father, age, intelligence, income, where you live, family attitude and expectations, features of the house where you live, distance of the house from the school, books at home, etc., so each of them are effective factors in the child's success and education. The ethnic features of the country where the child lives, the social and economic features of the environment, the social exclusion of the neighborhood where he lives affect the moral

values and attitudes of the child (Richards, 1986: 128).

Mother's and father's profession, income and economic level are factors that determine the socio-economic level. Especially the socio-economic situation in which the individual is located influences the development and behavior of the child. The high economic level of the family affects the change in the way events are viewed, and in some families, it brings facilities and positive effects on the child's education, creating a more positive atmosphere. Children who are part of families with a high economic level have more opportunities and therefore can rise higher in education and moral development. Children of such families fail to develop their abilities due to the lack of conditions (Tural, 2002: 35).

Also, the right education of children depends a lot on the pedagogical culture of the parents, which according to Ante Vukasovic has to do with “a proper fund of pedagogical knowledge and skills with which the purposeful, well-organized and consistently implemented educational activity is ensured” (Vukasovic, 1990). The education of preschool children depends to a considerable extent on the educational influence of parents, and for this reason, it is necessary for parents to be equipped with pedagogical and psychological knowledge. These pedagogical knowledge and skills will make parents more competent and active in the education of children of preschool age. They will be more confident in educational actions with preschoolers, they will be more responsible in terms of education, they will engage in overcoming the difficulties they face during the education of children. (Deva-Zuna, 2003). Consequently, we can note that the children who are educated

in the family during the preschool age, can often be lucky enough to be cared for by parents who lack pedagogical culture, and this results in the children not being educated right and be unprepared for primary schooling. In her conclusions, drawn by the author, she finds that contemporary pedagogical thought considers the family as a fundamental factor in the education of preschool children. She also categorizes the preschool age into three stages, starting from the young preschool age that includes the age of 3 to 4 years, the middle preschool age (from 4 to 5 years old) and the older preschool age (5 until the child goes to school). According to her, although the preschool age includes a relatively short period of human life, it is an extremely important period. Development in the preschool age represents the basis of the formation of the later personality. Another valuable finding, according to the author, is that the child's development in the period of early childhood and preschool has some general characteristics, and they are: the formation of the personality begins with the birth of the child: the development is very intense, in the anatomical-physiological aspect as well as in the behavior aspect; the time of individual development is different between individuals; intermittence in development (one aspect of development is faster, while the other aspect slows down, my note); alternation during development; constancy of the development order; cephalo-caudal direction of development, proximo-caudal and proximodistal direction of development; the tendency to eliminate excess muscle and energy; the disappearance of old phenomena and the appearance of new physical, motor and mental phenomena; the changes in the physical and mental proportion of the child as well as the

characteristics according to which the development at this age derives from the general, global behavior from the differentiated and specific one..

The development of the personality in general, as well as that of the child of this age, in particular, takes place under the influence of inborn factors, factors of the external environment, education and the activity of the individual himself. One of the external factors that exerts a strong influence on the formation of the preschool age child is precisely the family. It is a specific educational factor, because in addition to the natural reproduction of the individual, it also makes his social-cultural reproduction. Also, the younger the child is, the deeper the traces of education are and the longer the educational influence of the same educator lasts on children of this age, the deeper the educational result is.

The importance of communication and collaboration with parents

In early education institutions, children, besides with their families, spend most of their time with other children and with educators. However, the family is the basis of the child's life and cooperation with parents is very important for their effective education. Family life and dynamics, including eventual changes that may occur in children's lives within the family, socio-economic status affect their experience in early education institutions. Therefore, knowing the characteristics of children's families is an essential factor to understand more about the child and to provide qualitative education for him (ECEH, 2010). The

child's experiences in early education institutions are also estimated to have an impact on their family life. Continuous, reciprocal communication ensures cooperation between these two parties; therefore it is important that early education institutions make maximum efforts to build this cooperation. However, working with children and cooperation between the family and the educational institution are sometimes accompanied by difficulties.

According to Keyes, some of the factors that present difficulties while working with children is precisely the lack of cooperation with families related to:

- the level at which educators/teachers adapt to the culture and values of the parents;
- social factors influencing work, family and school;
- the way educators/teachers and parents see their role.

In relation to cooperation and communication with the institutions, respectively educators, parents can often be critical for a number of other reasons. For example:

- They feel like passive beneficiaries of services and professional decisions and that their voice is not heard enough. These concerns lead to parental dissatisfaction, concerns and conflicts in the institution-home relationship (Turnbull et al, 2015).
- Parents may evaluate that educators do not have the opportunity to communicate with them effectively, not showing closeness; they do not have active listening skills and skills in conveying information in a concrete and logical way (Turnbull et al., 2015).

Similar factors related to the communication approach and reluctance

to cooperate are also consistently identified for parents from early education institutions and especially educators. Therefore, sometimes inappropriate, and ineffective communication, the lack of opportunities to build collaboration, hinders educators, other professionals and the family in building partnerships (Blue-Banning, Summers, Frankland, Nelson & Beegle, 2004).

But the lack of a partnership, of such communication hinders the development of children's motor skills. Referring to previous studies, it has been proven that parents can contribute to the development and proper education of the child by also building cooperation through: parenting, communication, volunteering, supporting learning at home, decision-making and cooperation with the community (Epstein, 1995). In addition to the above forms, the involvement of parents is seen as a necessary and important element in children's assessment processes. It is important for parents to be effective partners in supporting their children in the education process, to be informed and educated about all children's needs, including how the education system works, rights and responsibilities, and strategies for contribution (Mereciu, Abercrombie, Murray 2016).

Some of the forms of communication with parents are:

Daily communication: The most frequent form of communication between staff and parents occurs during daily meetings, at the time of acceptance or delivery of children. This communication is very important and creates a bridge of cooperation between the family and the institution. Through information from the parents, the educator can pay attention to the main issues along the child's dynamics, which have

been reported by the parents. However, these interactions of communication are brief, due to the limited time the educator may have in disposal to inform all parents and continue classroom engagements with the children. Likewise, it often happens that even parents do not have enough time available to be sufficiently informed. Due to the limited time available to one or both parties and/or the approach of staff communication with parents and/or parents to staff, it is precisely this form of communication that causes dissatisfaction between both parties, considering it as a not appropriate communication of educators or limited parents' interest in children's activities during their daily stay. Therefore, to avoid such dissatisfaction, it is important that during the time available for information, educators convey information in a correct, accurate manner, with respect for the child and the family. Likewise, it is important that educators, during communication with parents, make sure that the issues related to the child's characteristics, his/her inappropriate behaviors, are not shared in the presence of the child and other parents. In any kind of communication with parents, the educator and every other person engaged in educational institutions must carefully handle issues/information, which may have a negative impact on children and families, making them feel offended, disrespected and humble. For any issue that needs to be communicated with parents, staff must follow a certain procedure: individual meeting, email, written report, etc.

Reporting: In addition to daily interactions, the educator must constantly inform parents about the children's activities and progress. This form of information serves to build trust and cooperation between

parents and early education institutions. Reports should be compiled in such a way as to illustrate as much as possible the child's engagement, progress and development process throughout all types of activities in relation to the educational plan and/or curriculum. In addition, the educator can include in the content of the report parts of the classroom activities, announcements, birthdays, information about special events, changes in personnel, etc. The frequency of the reporting form can be determined by the personnel or the institution.

Individual meetings: Educators, psychologists and other personnel engaged in the educational institution, who, within the framework of work tasks, are directly or indirectly engaged in the education and development of the child, it is important to have special methods for monitoring , observation and assessment of the child's progress in the institution. This information, in detail, should be forwarded to the parents or guardians of the children. These data are carefully evaluated to inform parents in detail about the dynamics of the child's development, through which, also, parents raise the level of confidence that educators and staff know, on the basis, and treat each child in a special way, as well as support his education and development in a fair way. During these meetings, it is important to also ask for the cooperation of parents.

Parents' Day: Parents can be invited for a special day, during which they can be an observer participant in the activities for children organized by the institution. The activities should not be organized in a special way as to consider the parents as guests, but it should be a regular day for the children and the institution. In this form, parents can

learn about the daily dynamics of their children; they can have access to the classroom, through which it has been proven to raise the level of sympathy with the role of the educator, but also to create closeness and understanding between the two parties.

Participation in education: From time to time, parents encourage each other to participate directly in supporting educators to care for children and organize activities with children. In this way they can experience and learn how educators prepare, plan and support children. This form of joint activities also helps to eliminate the distance between parents and educators. Moreover, this approach has been proven to improve children's level of motivation to learn, as their parents become "educators". Also, during the planning and preparation of the activities, the parents communicate with the educators and thus the cooperation and support between both sides is raised.

Participation in the preparation of activities: Parents should usually be encouraged to participate in the planning of special activities or events for the educational institution. These events can be different, including sports, cultural activities, etc. These events are different from the usual activities. Cooperation, in this direction, helps educators in their successful realization.

Conclusions

In light of the study's objectives and corroborated by antecedent research, the significance and function of collaboration between parents and pre-university educational institution representatives is

underscored. This highlights an augmentation in the level of interest and cognizance of both entities concerning the value of their mutual cooperation. Such collaboration is deemed crucial in amplifying the positive influence on the progression of children's motor abilities.

References

- Blue-Banning, M., Summers, J. A., Frankland, H. C., Nelson, L. L., & Beegle, G. (2004). Dimensions of family and professional partnerships: Constructive guidelines for collaboration. *Exceptional Children*, 70, 167–184.
- Keyes, C. R. (2000). Parent-Teacher Partnerships: A Theoretical Approach for Teachers. Shkarkuar nga <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.613.613&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Turnbull, A., Turnbull, R., Erwin, E. J., Soodak, L. C., & Shogren, K. A. (2015). Families, professionals, and exceptionality: Positive outcomes through partnerships and trust (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall
- Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76, 701–712
- ECEH, (2010). Early Childhood Education Handbook Research Center for Child and Adolescent Development and Education. Ochanomizu University. Shkarkuar nga: http://www.ocha.ac.jp/intl/cēed_old/cced/report/hand_E/2-8e.pdf

EMPOWERING DIVERSITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

Ciljeta SIMAKU

Clinical Psychologist at Mental Health Center

Executive Director of KIDC, Albania

ciliolli@yahoo.com

Arjan KAMBURI

Assistant Lecturer, Department of Education

University “Fan S. Noli” of Korçë, Albania

akamburi@unkorce.edu.al

Abstract:

This comprehensive inquiry is a meticulous exploration into the intricate dimensions of early childhood education, with a focal point on the seamless integration of inclusive practices meticulously tailored to empower a diverse spectrum of learners. The primary objective is to navigate the intricacies inherent in establishing an educational milieu that is not only inclusive but also nurturing for children with a kaleidoscope of abilities and disabilities. Through an illuminating

exploration of avant-garde strategies and interventions, this paper enriches our understanding of holistic development and elucidates its indispensable role in early childhood education.

Keywords: early childhood education, inclusive, education, strategies, interventions

Abstrakt

Ky hetim gjithëpërfshirës është një eksplorim i përpiktë në dimensionet e ndërlikuara të edukimit të fëmijërisë së hershme, me një pikë qendrore në integrimin e pandërprerë të praktikave gjithëpërfshirëse të përshtatura me përpikëri për të fuqizuar një spektër të larmishëm nxënësish. Objektivi parësor është të lundrohet në ndërlikimet e natyrshme në krijimin e një mjedisi arsimor që është jo vetëm gjithëpërfshirës, por edhe kujdestar për fëmijët me një kaleidoskop aftësish dhe aftësish të kufizuara. Përmes një eksplorimi ndriçues të strategjive dhe ndërhyrjeve avangarde, ky punim pasuron kuptimin tonë të zhvillimit holistik dhe sqaron rolin e tij të domosdoshëm në edukimin e fëmijërisë së hershme.

Fjalë kyçe: edukimi në fëmijërinë e hershme, gjithëpërfshirjes, edukim, strategji, ndërhyrje

Introduction

The study employs a nuanced approach to dissect both the hurdles and triumphs encountered in the implementation of inclusive practices. By undertaking this meticulous dissection, the research contributes invaluable insights for educators, caregivers, and policymakers who are actively engaged in the dynamic process of sculpting inclusive educational environments. The findings of this study resonate with a call for a paradigm shift in the conceptualization and implementation of inclusive practices, emphasizing the need for adaptability and innovation in the face of diverse learner needs.

In essence, this paper seeks to be a beacon, guiding educational stakeholders through the intricate landscape of inclusive education. Through the synthesis of contemporary research and practical experiences, it strives to inspire transformative practices that not only recognize the unique strengths and challenges of each learner but also foster a holistic developmental journey in the early years of education. As the educational landscape evolves, the insights garnered from this study aspire to be a cornerstone for shaping policies, curricula, and pedagogical approaches that resonate with the principles of inclusivity and, in turn, contribute to the creation of truly empowering and nurturing educational environments for all young learners.

Early childhood education marks a pivotal phase in the formative years of a child, serving as the bedrock for their subsequent growth and development. This period is characterized by rapid cognitive,

emotional, and social transformations, making it a crucial foundation for future learning experiences. As the landscape of society evolves, the composition of young learners becomes increasingly diverse, reflecting a kaleidoscope of backgrounds, abilities, and unique learning needs.

In response to this diversity, there emerges an imperative to adopt an inclusive approach to education, one that not only recognizes but actively embraces individual differences among children. The traditional paradigm of education, with its one-size-fits-all model, falls short in addressing the complexities of the modern classroom. (Christensen, Horn, & Johnson, 2008) It is within this context that this article unfolds, accentuating the vital need for the seamless integration of inclusive practices in early childhood education.

The call for inclusivity resonates with the changing demographics and societal dynamics. Children in today's classrooms embody a rich tapestry of cultural, linguistic, and cognitive diversity. The conventional view of education as a uniform process is replaced by an understanding that each child brings a unique set of strengths, challenges, and potentialities to the learning environment. Consequently, the integration of inclusive practices becomes not only beneficial but imperative. (Al-Hroub & Jouni, 2023; Hernández-Saca, Voulgarides, & Etscheidt, 2023)

This article seeks to shed light on the significance of inclusivity as an educational philosophy, particularly within the realm of early childhood education. It underscores the idea that an inclusive approach is not merely an accommodation for diversity but a celebration of it.

By recognizing and valuing the individuality of each learner, educators can create an environment that not only meets diverse needs but also nurtures a sense of belonging and acceptance.

As societies worldwide witness a demographic kaleidoscope, the creation of educational environments that cater to the unique needs and abilities of all children becomes not just a choice but a moral and pedagogical imperative. The introduction serves as a catalyst, setting the stage for a comprehensive and nuanced discussion on the transformative power of inclusive practices in fostering holistic development during the crucial early years of a child's life. It beckons educators, caregivers, and policymakers to embark on a journey of reimagining education, one that is inclusive, empowering, and responsive to the rich diversity inherent in every young learner.

Conceptual Background

In order to embark on a journey towards inclusive practices in early childhood education, a profound understanding of the conceptual underpinnings is indispensable. This section serves as the theoretical bedrock, navigating through key concepts that form the intellectual scaffold for the study's framework. Each concept is meticulously examined, laying the groundwork for a more profound comprehension of inclusive practices and their implications within the early childhood education landscape.

Empowering diversity transcends the mere acknowledgment of differences; it embodies a philosophy that actively seeks to harness the

unique strengths, perspectives, and experiences of every individual. In the context of early childhood education, empowering diversity implies creating an inclusive environment that not only accommodates varied abilities and backgrounds but also fosters a sense of agency, self-worth, and active participation among all learners.

Early childhood education encompasses more than structured learning experiences; it is a holistic and formative period that influences a child's cognitive, emotional, and social development. Understanding the intricacies of this phase involves recognizing the significance of care, play, and education as interwoven components. A nuanced comprehension of early childhood education forms the basis for designing inclusive practices that resonate with the unique needs of young learners.

At its core, inclusive practices in early childhood education involve methodologies and strategies that ensure the active participation and success of all children within a diverse learning environment. It goes beyond a mere integration of diverse learners; it is a commitment to adapting teaching methods, materials, and interactions to accommodate the individual learning styles and needs of every child. (MOSES, 2021)

The concept of diverse learners in early childhood education extends beyond traditional notions of diversity. It encompasses children with varying abilities, needs, and backgrounds within an educational setting. Recognizing and appreciating this diversity is fundamental to tailoring inclusive practices that address the range of individual characteristics and learning profiles present in the classroom.

Holistic development, within the context of early childhood education, transcends academic achievement. It encompasses the comprehensive growth of a child, spanning physical, cognitive, emotional, and social domains. Inclusive practices should not only address cognitive milestones but also actively nurture the emotional well-being, social competence, and physical health of each child.

Educational empowerment involves strategies and interventions aimed at fostering a sense of agency, confidence, and active engagement in the learning process. In the realm of inclusive practices, it denotes an approach that equips diverse learners with the tools and support needed to navigate educational challenges and harness their full potential.

Innovative inclusion signifies cutting-edge approaches that transcend traditional methods, recognizing the dynamic nature of diverse learners and evolving educational landscapes. It involves embracing new technologies, pedagogical approaches, and collaborative initiatives to create inclusive environments that are responsive to the ever-changing needs of young learners. (Chee & Sanmugam, 2023)

This conceptual background serves as the intellectual compass guiding the study. Drawing on a rich tapestry of existing literature and theoretical frameworks from renowned scholars in the field of education, it establishes a robust foundation. By elucidating and interconnecting these key concepts, the study endeavors to provide a comprehensive understanding of inclusive practices in early childhood education, setting the stage for a detailed exploration of methodology and nuanced findings in subsequent sections.

Methodology

In navigating the intricate terrain of inclusive practices in early childhood education, a robust and meticulous methodology is paramount. This section delineates the intricacies of the research design, illuminating the chosen methods for data collection and the analytical procedures that underpin this comprehensive study.

The chosen research design embodies a mixed-methods approach, seamlessly integrating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. This deliberate blending allows for a more holistic and nuanced exploration of the effectiveness of inclusive practices. The convergence of diverse data sources enriches the study, providing a multifaceted perspective on the complex landscape of early childhood education.

Structured surveys serve as a quantitative tool, offering a systematic and standardized approach to gather data. Educators, parents, and stakeholders involved in early childhood education are presented with carefully crafted survey instruments. These surveys are designed to elicit quantitative responses, capturing a broad overview of perceptions, attitudes, and experiences related to inclusive practices.

Qualitative depth is achieved through in-depth interviews with educators, parents, and key stakeholders. These interviews provide a platform for participants to articulate their experiences, challenges, and insights in a more nuanced manner. Open-ended questions facilitate a

rich exploration of personal narratives, allowing for the identification of unique perspectives and contextual nuances.

Direct and systematic observations within early childhood education settings form a crucial component of the methodology. By immersing researchers in the actual learning environment, this method allows for the qualitative assessment of inclusive practices in action. Observations capture the dynamics of teacher-student interactions, peer relationships, and the overall atmosphere within inclusive classrooms.

Participants:

The study's participants are deliberately chosen to represent a diverse cross-section of the early childhood education community. Educators, parents, and children from varied backgrounds, socio-economic statuses, and geographical locations form an inclusive participant pool. This deliberate inclusivity ensures that the findings reflect the richness and complexity of the broader early childhood education landscape.

Data Analysis

Survey data undergoes rigorous quantitative analysis using statistical tools. Descriptive statistics unveil patterns, trends, and correlations, providing a quantitative lens through which to assess the prevalence and impact of inclusive practices. This quantitative dimension offers a quantitative foundation for assessing the overarching effectiveness of inclusive strategies.

Qualitative data from interviews and observations are subjected to thematic analysis. This process involves identifying recurring themes,

patterns, and insights within the qualitative data. Through a systematic and iterative process, themes emerge, capturing the depth and nuances of participant experiences. Thematic analysis enriches the study by providing qualitative depth and context to complement quantitative findings.

The synthesis of quantitative and qualitative findings yields a comprehensive understanding of the challenges, success factors, and overarching impact of inclusive practices in early childhood education. By triangulating data from multiple sources, the study aims to present a holistic portrayal that informs educators, policymakers, and stakeholders about the intricacies and opportunities within inclusive early childhood education environments.

In essence, the methodology section encapsulates a deliberate and thoughtful approach to unraveling the complexities of inclusive practices. The chosen mixed-methods approach positions this study at the intersection of quantitative rigor and qualitative depth, promising a nuanced exploration that contributes meaningfully to the discourse on inclusive education.

Sample

In the pursuit of a comprehensive understanding of inclusive practices in early childhood education, the selection of samples plays a pivotal role in shaping the richness and applicability of the study. This section elucidates the meticulous process involved in choosing a diverse spectrum of samples to ensure the study's credibility and relevance.

Early Childhood Education Settings

The inclusion of both public and private schools in the sample pool recognizes the diversity in educational structures. Public schools often represent a broader socio-economic cross-section, while private schools may provide unique insights into alternative educational approaches. This intentional duality contributes to a holistic understanding of inclusive practices across different institutional frameworks.

Daycare centers, as integral components of early childhood education, are included to capture the nuances of inclusive practices in informal and early developmental settings. Insights from daycare centers contribute to the study's richness, reflecting the diverse experiences of young learners in environments that may differ from traditional school settings.

Encompassing community-based programs ensures a comprehensive exploration of inclusive practices beyond formalized educational institutions. Programs initiated by community organizations often cater to specific needs within diverse populations. By including these settings, the study aims to uncover unique challenges and successes that may emerge in community-centric early childhood education initiatives.

Subjects

Educators form a critical part of the participant pool, representing the frontline implementers of inclusive practices. By including educators from various settings, including public schools, private schools, daycare centers, and community programs, the study captures a diverse range of instructional methodologies and experiences. Insights from educators provide a granular understanding of the challenges and opportunities in implementing inclusive practices.

The involvement of parents in the study is essential to gauge the perspectives, expectations, and experiences of families within diverse early childhood education settings. Including parents from different socio-economic backgrounds enriches the study with insights into how inclusive practices resonate within the family dynamic and their impact on a child's holistic development.

Children, the primary beneficiaries of early childhood education, are integral participants in the study. Their experiences, perceptions, and responses to inclusive practices provide a unique lens through which to evaluate the effectiveness of such strategies. By including children from various backgrounds, the study strives to amplify the voices of the most direct stakeholders in the educational process.

The intentional selection of participants from various socio-economic backgrounds ensures a nuanced exploration of inclusive practices across economic strata. Socio-economic factors often intersect with educational experiences, and by including participants from diverse

economic backgrounds, the study aims to uncover potential disparities and successes in implementing inclusive strategies.

Geographical diversity is equally prioritized, acknowledging that the educational landscape can vary significantly based on regional, cultural, and contextual factors. By drawing participants from different geographical locations, the study enhances its external validity, allowing for findings that are not only applicable within specific contexts but also transferable to a broader spectrum of early childhood education environments.

The meticulous curation of samples across various educational settings, participant roles, socio-economic strata, and geographical locations is designed to fortify the study's credibility and enhance its applicability. This diverse and intentional sampling strategy ensures that the findings resonate with the complexity of the early childhood education landscape, contributing valuable insights that can inform inclusive practices across a broad array of settings.

Conclusions

The conclusions derived from this comprehensive study serve as a distilled essence of the findings, weaving together the nuanced successes and challenges encountered in the intricate web of implementing inclusive practices in early childhood education. This pivotal section encapsulates key insights, underlining the critical importance of adopting innovative strategies and collaborative

initiatives to cultivate an environment where each child can not only learn but truly thrive.

The synthesis of key insights reveals a multifaceted understanding of inclusive practices in early childhood education. Successes and challenges, intricately woven into the fabric of the educational landscape, are unveiled to provide a holistic view of the transformative potential of inclusive methodologies.

The conclusions resoundingly emphasize the imperative need to embrace innovation and collaborative approaches in educational practices. The evolving nature of diverse learners and the dynamic educational landscape necessitate forward-thinking strategies that transcend traditional boundaries. This advocacy for innovation echoes throughout the study, underscoring the call to continuously explore and adopt cutting-edge methodologies to address the diverse needs of young learners.

At the heart of the conclusions lies a resolute affirmation of the pivotal role of early childhood education as a catalyst for positive and transformative change. The formative years, marked by inclusive practices, become a cornerstone for shaping the trajectory of each child's developmental journey. This recognition of early childhood education as a catalyst goes beyond the classroom, extending into the realms of societal and systemic transformation.

A central theme woven into the conclusions is the steadfast commitment to diversity and inclusion. The study posits that early childhood education, when rooted in principles of inclusivity, becomes a powerful force for shaping a more just and empowered society. By

fostering an environment where differences are not only acknowledged but celebrated, the study envisions a future where every child's potential is recognized and realized, irrespective of their unique abilities or backgrounds. (Muslifar, Erwiantoro, Sulistiano, Rangka, & Ifdil, 2017)

The study's conclusions culminate in a visionary perspective – that early childhood education becomes a fulcrum for shaping a future where the potential of each child is not hindered by societal preconceptions or limitations. By instilling a commitment to diversity and inclusion in the foundational years, the study envisions a transformative impact that ripples through generations, paving the way for a society where the inherent worth of every individual is cherished and upheld.

In essence, the conclusions encapsulate the essence of the study, urging educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to heed the call for transformative practices in early childhood education. The vision articulated in the conclusions beckons towards a future where the promise of every child is fulfilled, contributing to the creation of a more equitable, empowered, and inclusive society.

References

Al-Hroub, A., & Jouni, N. (2023). Historical and Theoretical Approaches to Inclusive Education. In A. Al-Hroub, & N. Jouni, *School Inclusion in Lebanon* (pp. 47-65). Springer, Cham. doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-34779-5_4

- Chee, K. N., & Sanmugam, M. (2023). *Embracing Cutting-edge Technology in Modern Educational Settings*. IGI Global.
- Christensen, C. M., Horn, M. B., & Johnson, C. W. (2008). *Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation will Change the Way the World Learns*. McGraw Hill Professional.
- Hernández-Saca, D. I., Voulgarides, C. K., & Etscheidt, S. L. (2023). A Critical Systematic Literature Review of Global Inclusive Education Using an Affective, Intersectional, Discursive, Emotive and Material Lens. *Education Sciences*, 13(12), 1212. doi:<https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13121212>
- MOSES, A. (2021, Winter). Individuality and Inclusive Practices for Early Childhood. *Young Children*.
- Muslifar, R., Erwiantoro, E., Sulistiano, E., Rangka, I. B., & Ifdil, I. (2017). Development of Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs Based on Social-Economic Family. In *1st International Conference on Educational Sciences ICES. 2*, pp. 268-273. Bandung, Indonesia: SciTePress. doi:10.5220/0007048908170822

